Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Spiritual Suicide
Scripture: Colossians 3:5-9
Code: 2146

We come to Chapter 3, Verses 5 through 9. Actually, the whole third chapter and on into the fourth is the practical part of the book, the part that responds to the first two chapters of doctrine. We're going to begin to look at this section tonight beginning with Verses 5 through the first part of Verse 9. Let me read it to you. Colossians 3:5 - "Kill therefore your members which are upon the Earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire and covetousness (which is idolatry) for which things sake the wrath of God cores. In which ye also once walked when you lived in them. But you now also put off all of these - anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth, lie not one to another." Stop right there. Now those are really practical truths. They are very straightforward and very direct. They introduce us to a concept that I mentioned to you this morning and that is the concept of spiritual suicide. The first word is "Kill." Your old English version may say mortify, put to death. It's the same thing.

The believer is invited by the Apostle Paul to commit suicide in regard to some of the things in his life. Now, the dictionary defines suicide as the act of killing one's self intentionally. The passage here is inviting every Christian to do exactly that. You remember, last time we looked at Verses 1 to 4 and we studied the risen life. "If ye then being risen with Christ seek the things which are above, set your affections on things above and not on things on the Earth." We talked about living the risen life. Living the risen life involves the process of killing the old life in a practical way. Now positionally, and I want to clarify this for you, positionally that has been done. When you came to Jesus Christ and received Him as your Savior and Lord, when you confessed your sin and were born again, God as an act of sovereign power, killed the old life and gave you new life. But that has to work itself out in you practically in an every day kind of living.' What God has-done positionally, what God has done in reference to your state in Christ, you need to work out in your own practice. You have been made dead to sin. You have died to the old life. You have been crucified with Christ. All of that is dead and you live new life. You live risen life, but you need to appropriate all of that in a practical way and that involves the practical slaying of some features of that old life that wants to hang on. So in a spiritual sense in one way, you have already committed suicide. You voluntarily came to Jesus. You voluntarily confessed your sin. You voluntarily appropriated the death of Christ, and you said, "Death to the old man." Right? Death to the old life. Death to the old nature.

So positionally you have already committed spiritual suicide, and in a real sense, that's what you do, isn't it? You come and you die to self. You die to self will. You die to your own ambition. You die to your own ego. You die to your own pride. You say, "Christ is all and He is Lord and I submit." You

said that positionally and you have to continue to say it practically. Now, Paul in a letter to the Colossians has demonstrated powerfully the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. We say particularly in the first chapter and through the second chapter, Verse 7, how Paul presents the total sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Then we saw in the second chapter that he says_ -believers are not to feel intimidated or threatened by those people who come along and say, "Well, you can't just have Christ. You also have to have philosophy. You can't just have Christ. You also have to have legalism. You can't just have Christ. You also have to have visions and higher knowledge.

You can't just have Christ. You need to have rigorous self-denial. All the way through Paul keeps saying, "No. Christ is all. Christ is all. You arecomplete in Christ. Nothing else will lead you to salvation. Nothing else will lead you to spiritually except Christ. -You've been given new life, he says in Chapter 3. Novi he says, get up in the heavenlies and live it. Cut the cords to the Earth and live the heavenly life. Let your practice match your position.

Now it's very typical of Paul, after so much theology, to move down to the practical. He likes to get up there and run around in the mountaintops of theology, but he sooner or later scurries down to the valley of living and tells us how we apply this. He comes to a landing in Chapter 3, Verse 5. He comes off the mountain of the mysteries of God and he makes it livable. "How do I live the heavenly life, Paul? How do I really take these tremendous truths about Christ, the tremendous reality that He is all I need, that I am sufficient in Him, the exciting truth that I have a heavenly kind of life, a risen life. How do I make it work? What do I do to get it down to where I'm living?" He says, "Commit spiritual suicide on a practical level. Start killing some things in your life." It's kind of like what Jesus said when He said, "You need to take up your cross." Daily. You see, "daily" in the life of a Christian is an exercise in dying. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "I die daily." I die daily. I'm in the business of committing spiritual suicide every day that I live, saying no to self, no to self desire, no to the things of the world. You know, you will never be able to ascend. We were talking about this last Lord's Day. You will never be able to ascend into the heavens and really live the risen life until you die to the world and die to the things that are in it. A radical kind of thing has to take place, and you may be in the heavenlies by inheritance and you may be in the heavenlies by right, but you'll never really walk there until you begin to kill some things in this world. Now notice Verse 5 and let's see what he says: "Kill therefore your members which are on the earth." Now stop there for a minute and we'll talk about that statement, because that's the preliminary to getting into it. It's an arrostactive imperative. It means "a point action," a "once and for all," "kill it." Now to the point in your life where you make a definite commitment to these things that they're going to die. You're going to put them out of your life.

Now there have been many people who misinterpreted this. They have interpreted it in a very physical way and they have felt that Paul is saying, "Injure yourself." I met a man one time, in fact, I had a car accident. You know about it. When the man was coming to settle the insurance he was

telling me about his experience with God. He was telling me what a righteous man he was and what a religious man he was and I said, "Well, on what basis do you say that?" He says, "Because I wear a special belt." I said, "Well, what kind of a belt do you wear?" He said, "I wear a belt with nails in it under my clothes, and I never take it off. It continues to cut and tear up my middle." "Why do you wear that?" "Because I am killing the flesh. I am suffering for my sins." That isn't what Paul is talking about, is it? He's not talking about the voluntary castration of people like Aurigin and others who did that as an act of so-called self-mortification. That isn't what he's talking about. You know, that would be like taking the statement of Jesus, and this has been done too, in Matthew where he says, "If your right eye offends you, pluck it out and throw it away, for it is better that one of your members should perish so that your whole body doesn't get cast into hell. If your right hand offends you, cut it off." You know, there have been people who misconstrued that and did that! They actually did that. You say, "Well, it's a nice gesture." Yeah, it's a nice gesture' (Laughter) you say, "It's well meaning." Sure it's well meaning, but do you think it cured the problem? Jesus was misunderstood there and Paul has been misunderstood here. He is hot calling for some kind of asceticism that he just got through saying isn't the issue at the end of Chapter 2. He is calling for the elimination of everything from your life and my life that is against God. To clarify what he is saying you would need to compare just one verse and it would be clear, I think. In Romans Chapter 8, Verse 13 he says this: "If you live after the flesh, you're going to die. But if you, through the Spirit, do kill the deeds of the body, you will live." What he means in killing is not killing the body, but killing the deeds of the body. If you kill the deeds of the sinful nature, you kill the deeds of the fleshly nature. Then you really begin to experience spiritual life, heavenly life, in the way that God intended. You'll really begin to live the risen life.

So the Christian has to deal with self-centeredness, private desires and personal ambitions, and there must, be a radical slaying of these things. I guess all of us realize sooner or later when we become Christians, and maybe some of you are new Christians and you haven't really felt the full impact, but you're not a Christian very long before you realize that all of a sudden there is a tremendous struggle. The struggle that goes on within your new nature is the effort of your new nature to really live the heavenly life, and then all of a sudden you find that there is something holding you back. It's all these things that are part of the old pattern. They have to be killed when the battle is on. Although, we are new creatures on the inside, we have to struggle with the old outside and that's the flesh and that's the battle.

So that the members of our bodies can either instruments for the new man, like in Romans 12 he says, "Present your body as a living sacrifice so it can be an instrument of the old man." But here Paul's point is very clear in Verse 5. He says, "Therefore, since you are possessors of risen life, since you live in the heavenlies, since you are raised from the dead, since your life is hid with Christ in God, since Christ is your life, since Christ will come and take you to be with Him and you will even appear with Him in His glory, since all of this is true and the heavenlies is your hone, therefore kill the things that are left on the Earth. Cut the cord. Slay those things so you can really ascend to live in the heavens. That's his point. In Chapter 2, Verse 20 do you remember what he said? He said, "If you're

dead with Christ from the basics of the world, why would you live in the world?" If you've died to those things in Christ, why would you desire to hang on?

Turn with me for just a brief moment to Romans, Chapter 6. 1 want to show you the passage that most parallels this one. Romans 6:11. Paul has just carefully discussed the fact of positional death in verse 1 to 10 and how when we cam to Christ we died to the old life. So he says in Verse 11, "Likewise, count yourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Now he says, "Look. Here is the process. You are dead, positionally. Count on it," and then he makes the practical statement in Verse 12. "Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies that you should obey it in its lusts." You are dead. That's Verse 10. Realize it. That's Verse 11. Do something about it. That's Verse 12. Here's how. That's Verse 13. Don't yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. In other words, that's just a preliminary to what he's going to say five or six chapters later when he says, "Present your bodies. You're dead positionally. Count on it. Act like it. Here's how. Don't yield your bodily members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God."

So it boils down to this one practical thing. Those parts of my body which tend to sin, I must prevent from doing that and direct toward the things that would be righteous. We are new creatures. We need to live it. Now I want you to notice back again in Colossians, that the terms he uses here is kind of interesting and might bring up a little confusion if we didn't deal with it. He says, "Kill your members which are upon the Earth." I guess you get the idea when he goes from there, he says, "Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, covetousness." Are these our members? I mean, those aren't the members of my body. Those are the things that those members of my body do. Why does he call that the members of my body? Well, do you remember a few weeks ago that I mentioned to you a term, the term "metteneme," or "mettenem"? I said that a mettenem or a metteneme as it appears most often is substituting one thing for another because there is such a close relationship. I tried to illustrate that to you. Some of you still don't get it. So I thought of a good illustration. Tonight, at last! (Laughter) Do you remember when you said to your kid, "Don't give me any lip!"?Do you remember that? That's metteneme. He didn't give you his lip! (Laughter) What did he do? He gave you some back-talk. But because of the association between the talk and the lip that it came out of, you substitute lip for talk. It's simply a figure of speech. Because of the association that sin has with our bodily members, Paul calls the members the sinners. That's all. It's just a figure of speech. He wants us to understand that it is our bodily members that get us into trouble because they are not in control. The members produce the effects mentioned in the five sins. So they are identified with the sins themselves. The body members that he talks about there are forms of evil which the body practices.

So he says we are to kill these things. That's the simple thing. I mean, in terms of command it's a little tougher to carry out. We'll talk about that in a few minutes. What is it that he's asking us to kill? Well,

just to help us he gives us some good healthy lists. I mean, they are good and healthy for us to hear, because these are the things that are the most troublesome sins. These are sample sins. This is a sin sampler. I want you to know that the Bible gets very specific, right from the Ten Commandments when God talks about sin. He doesn't talk in-generalities. He talks in very clear specifics. He gives two lists. One is in Verse 5 and the other is in Verse 8. In between there is something else that is very interesting that we'll mention to you. But the two lists in Verses 5 and 8 are simply lists of sins. The first list speaks about unholy kinds of love. The second list, wicked kinds of hate. So they are set in contrast. The first is perverted love. The second is wicked hate.

The first list begins with acts and moves to motives. The second list begins with motives and moves to deeds or acts. The first list is personal. The second is social. The first is related to feelings and the second is related to speech. So there are some interesting parallels and we'll see these as we go.

Let's look at list number one in Verse 5. These are the things that we have to kill in our lives. These are the things of the flesh that we have to deal with. They are personal, they are passion sins, they are related to feelings. He moves from the actual sin itself backwards to the motive. Notice the sequence. Kill these things: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Notice the sequence. First you have evil action. Fornication means sexual sin. Evil action occurs because of uncleanness. Uncleanness means "an unholy affection." An unholy affection comes from a perverted passion at heart, and that's what inordinate affection and evil desire mean. That all-comes out of the core of a man's being which is covetousness, that is, man is ever wanting what is forbidden. What it all really boils down to is that man is idolatress, because whenever you say, "I want what I want," no matter what God says, you are worshipping yourself instead of Him, right? So you go all the way back. So you can see, he starts with the deed and goes all the Way back to the heart of it.

Now I want to look at these five sins rather briefly. First of all, immorality. The word "pornea" is the Greek word for "sexual sin." That's where we get our word "pornography." It's from the Greek word "pornea" and "graphe," which is a picture or a writing about evil sin. Sex sin. Basically, immorality refers to unlawful sexual relationships. That's the basic meaning. But it goes beyond just a man and a woman in a relationship, and it would cover any kind of forbidden sexual act. Any kind at all. It is evil in that realm. Now we could spend a tremendous amount of time, weeks doing a series on that. If we ever had a series on that we'd probably have a fairly good attendance. (Laughter) Whenever you talk about that subject you always get two reactions. Some people slide up on the end of their chairs and think, "I've been waiting for this for a long time." (Laughter) "It's my favorite subject!" Other people grab their Bibles and head for the door. (Laughter) But there's got to be a balance. No one will leave for a few minutes yet, believe me. (Laughter)

There's got to be a balance and in understanding this. It's a simple thing and I don't want to take the time to go into it, but if you study the Scripture you can go all the way through and just trace God's

attitude toward this. It's very serious. In the Old Testament, this kind of evil was punished with death. God's attitude hasn't changed. His act toward men is a little more gracious now in this age, but His attitude hasn't changed. Any evil in the realm of sex is to be killed, to be put away. God forbids any sexual activity outside of marriage. Any! These evil acts spring out of uncleanness. Look at the second term. That mans evil thoughts. It means evil thoughts, filthy thoughts. Filthy intentions. That's essentially what Jesus said. A man who looks on a woman and lusts after her has committed adultery in his heart. It's that evil thought that is behind the evil deed. It's when it gets right up front and it becomes a dominating thought. That is precisely what our Lord meant in Mark 7, Verse 21: "For from within out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts and then adulteries, fornications." You see? Adultery and fornication comes from the evil thought pattern. I've said this so many times. You control you thoughts and you can control your body. You control your mind and you can control your emotions. Do you remember when we studied the heart? The Hebrew sees the heart as the minds and the bowels as the emotional responses. You control the mind and you'll control the body. That's why Paul says in Romans 12 that when you present yourself to God you present yourself in order that you might have your mind not conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of your mind. In other words, it is the mind that God wants to capture. It is the mind that controls the behavior and so, evil thoughts produce sin just as righteous thoughts produce righteous deeds. That's why Philippians 4:8 simply says, "If there's any virtue, if there's any praise, think on these things." What things? Whatever things are pure and lovely and honest and of good report.

That's why in Colossians in Chapter 3, Verse 16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Let the word of Christ be the controlling influence in your mind. That's why we emphasize the study of the Bible. You control you mind, believe me, you'll control your sex drive. You feed your mind all kinds of illicit things and you're going to have a tremendous problem with your sex drives. Tremendous. You can't help it.

Now remember that what Paul is saying here is something new to the ancient pagan world. To them, a relationship outside of marriage was nothing at all. There was no stigma to it. They could do whatever they wanted to do. That didn't even matter. That was like our society today. You could tell somebody today that you don't believe in sex aside from marriage at all and they look at you like something is wrong with you. "You've got to be kidding!" I remember when I was invited to speak at a university out here in a class on the Christian sex ethic, and I told you what happened. I knew if I went in there and said, "Now here's what God's standard is for all of you," they would laugh me right out of the place. So I went in and I just told them, I started out by saying, "You're not going to accept anything I say. You're not going to want to believe it. You have absolutely no motive for believing. It's going to sound puritanical. It's going to sound Victorian. It's going to sound ridiculous. There's no reason for you to believe it. I'm confident that none of you will even be interested in trying to adapt to this." By that time of course, they were all saying, "Oh, yeah?" Because that's the college mentality. (Laughter) So I had them right where I wanted them. And I said, "The reason you're not going to want to do this is because you don't love the Christ who gave these principles and so you don't understand

why. The real issue here is that if you don't know the Christ who tells you about this ethic, you have no reason to keep this ethic." A student said, "Well, how can we know the Christ? We've got to start at the beginning, don't we?" (Laughter) About 30 minutes later the rabbi was beating on his desk and saying, "Let's get back to the subject!" (Laughter)

There is no way that the average person in the world's system is going to think anything different than what the system thinks. He has no resident truth teacher in the Holy Spirit. He has no insight into the word of God. He has absolutely no motive to obey the Scripture. He will think exactly what the system thinks. You cannot expect anything other than that kind of behavior that issues out of that kind of thinking.

Unclean deeds just come from unclean thoughts. You have to expect unclean deeds in a society that is dominated by unclean thinking. Now where does this come from? Well, he takes us one step further back in Verse 5. Sexual sin cams from evil thoughts, and then he uses two terms here; "inordinate affection and evil desire." Those two terms simply mean passion and evil desire. It's very hard to distinguish those two terms. They must have meant something with a little shade of meaning to the Greek, but it's hard this many years later to understand exactly what they mean. One of the very outstanding Greek experts, Lightfoot, says that the term "passion" or as it is in the King James inordinate affection that that third term there seems to be a more passive term referring to sexual passion in a more latent way, whereas evil desire is a fired up kind of thing. It's just sort of two different levels of intensity in passion.

So he is simply saying this: that latent sexual desire becomes activated sexual desire creates evil thoughts creating evil deeds. This is a very simple sequence. So we see a society of people driven by passion, driven by evil desire. "Epi tomia" is a desire for the evil fulfillment. In First Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul in Chapter 4 calls on to Christians and says, "Don't you operate Verse 5 in the lust of evil desire as the heathen who know not God." They go beyond and defraud their brothers. In other words, sexually they assault each other. They're just out for what they can get. They take advantage of somebody. They're just out to grab what they can grab. There's no commitment. Now that's typical of the world's system. It's down deep in the depraved heart of a man. There's a smoldering passion. That smoldering passion gets fanned. That evil desire becomes aroused and creates an evil thought. The evil thought creates an evil deed. They're really just sitting around waiting for somebody to flip the switch that puts them out of control, because they have no way to hold it back. Now I would add that, here with these things, you can broaden this into any sense. It's always that smoldering, evil desire that generates any sin, but going back to the very bottom, look at the last of the terms it uses. Covetousness. This is the bottom of it all. This is the old timer. Covetousness.

I read an interesting statement this week by a Catholic priest who said, and he had been a priest for many, many years, decades! He said, "In all of the years of hearing confessions, I never once heard anyone confess the sin of covetousness." Maybe it's because it's the deepest, one of the most

heinous, one of the most evil, one of the ones that we don't like to admit. But look at it here. It's one of the oldies. It appeared in the first list of 10, didn't it? The Ten Commandments. Covetousness is desiring what is forbidden. Jesus considered the covetous heart to be the root from which comes the evil deed. I think that's what Paul is saying. Jesus said, "You look and you desire and that gets you into trouble." James said the same thing. You see something. You don't have it. You want it. So you lust and you war to get it. It all gets down to covetousness really is, he says, is idolatry. Let me give you the simple definition of sin. In your life, as you live, you either worship God or you worship yourself. If you truly worship God as God then you say, "God, what pleases you?" God says, "This pleases me." You say, "Yes God. That's what I'll do." If you don't, you say, "Self, what pleases you?" Self says, "I want that." You say, "But God says no, and that's forbidden." But self says, "I don't care. I want that." And you bow at the shrine of self, and out of that deep seeded covetousness is generated the evil desire that flames itself into an evil thought and generates an evil deed. In order to get at the core of sin, I think Paul is driving us back to the fact that if you're going to kill, don't just whack the branches. Get down to the root of this deal, which is basically setting up yourself as someone to be worshipped over God. The Greek word for covetousness, "plionexia" is from two words. "Plion" means more and "exia" means to have. "To have more." It means more than just that. It mans to have what isn't yours to have. The forbidden thing. In fact, the Greeks themselves defined plionexia as insatiable desire, and one Greek writer said, "You might as easily satisfy it as to fill a bowel with a hole in it." It can't be satisfied. Sinful desire, ruthless self-seeking. It's that deep seeded covetousness that really is a twin to pride. Isn't it? "I want what I want for me."

You know, every sin you ever commit comes down to that root. You either do what you know God wants, and you know what God has given, and you worship God in it or you worship yourself, violate God, set yourself up as the one to be satisfied, yourself as the one to be worshipped, yourself as the one to be given homage, and you do that sin. And every time you sin it goes right back to that same root. You have chosen yourself over God. That's idolatry, and idolatry is the most heinous sin. When God said, "You shall have no other Gods before me," He included you as one of those no other Gods. But that deep down covetousness when it is directed toward money, what does it end up in? Stealing. When it's directed toward fame, what does it end up in? Boasting. When covetousness is directed toward success, it ends up in selfish ambition and hurting other people. When covetousness is directed toward power it ends up in tyranny. When covetousness is directed toward a person it ends up in sexual sin. The desire to have self-seeking greed. I say it again; every sin comes from that black spring. Every one. Isn't it interesting that the priest said that in his entire life he never heard anybody confess covetousness? People don't strike at the root. It is idolatry. It is self-worship. To worship sex, money, power, ambition, to worship anything like that is to worship what you want, to worship self. What you covet is your idol.

Paul dealt with this earlier in Ephesians, Chapter 5, Verse 3. He said, "But sexual sin and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you as become a saint. Neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting which are not fitting but rather giving thanks, for this you know

that no sexual sinner nor unclean person nor covetous man who is an idolater." It's the same person. Covetousness is idolatry. Covetousness leads to sexual evil. Now listen. If you studied the Old Testament just in a cursory fashion, you will find very soon as you study that the link between sex and idolatry is clear. Those two things go together right through the Old Testament. Have you ever noticed that? Sex and idolatry, Satan mixes those constantly. Why? Because that's what it is. The people who worshipped Bale didn't really worship Bale as much as they worshipped what they could do when they worshipped Bale. Do you understand what I mean? They worshipped the liberty that they had. They worshipped the sex orgies that were a part of it. That was the real god. They were seeing the satisfaction of their lusts in that system. I'll show you some illustrations in Numbers, Chapter 25, verse 1. It says, "Israel abode in Shidum and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab, and they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods, and the people did eat and bow down to their gods. Why? Because their gods allowed sexual evil. So the marriage was easy. And Israel joined himself to Bial Payore and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. Here you have the harlotry as a form of idolatry and it's so easy. Once you're worshipping other than the true God whether it is sex or money or anything else, you can be led right into another form of idolatry because it is all the same thing.

Look at First Kings 14:21. Reabom, the son of Solomon, reigned in Judah. "Reabom was 41 years old when he began to reign. He reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord did choose out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. His mother's name was Nehema, and Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they committed above all that their fathers had done." It must have been something worse than any previous generation. "They build high places and images and idols on every high hill and under every green tree, and there were also sodomites in the land." Do you knowwhat sodomites were? Homosexuals. Hem you have another connection between sexual evil and idolatry. This time it is homosexuality. These things pass between each other and among each other and mix without any problem. The 15th of First Kings tells us more about the same thing. Verse 11 -"And Asah did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord as did David his father. He took away the sodomites out of the land and removed all of the idols his father had made. And also Meacha, his mother, even her he removed from being queen because she had made an idol in a grove and Asah destroyed her idol, burned it by the Brook Kidron. But the high places were not removed. "Nevertheless, Asah's heart was perfect with the Lord all of his days, and he brought in the things which his father had dedicated and the things which he himself had dedicated into the house of the Lord - silver, gold and vessels."

Now here was a case where one king destroyed the idols and what was beautiful about it was that the sexual evil connected with them seemed to subside along with it. Those two things go together. There's a statement in, I think, Second Kings 23:7 that is similar. "He broke down the houses of the sodomites that were by the house of the Lord where the women wove hangings for the idol." Here is the reign of Josiah, and where they worshipped the idol was where the homosexuality went on. Again, sexual evil connected with idolatry. In the second chapter of Amos in Verse 6, "Thus saith the

Lord, 'For three transgression of Israel and four I'll not turn away its punishment. They have sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes, that pant after the dust of the Earth on the head of the poor and turn aside the 'way of the meek and they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar. They drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God." The picture here is of sex orgies in an idolatrous temple. Again, it's the very same-thing. They just go together. You see there a tie-in. Idolatry is the worship of self in any of its lustful fulfillments. So when they simply personalize it into the name of a deity it just goes together beautifully. When God is ignored and any lust runs to the gambit, it becomes idolatry in itself and is easily carried off into the worship of a false god.

So we see then a progression here. The root sin of man is idolatry. That is, he struggles to worship himself, and God just gets in the way of that Because there is that tremendous desire to fulfill Himself, and to meet His own needs and to pander his own desires, he is covetous. In that covetousness is a deep and latent desire for what is forbidden. Under the right circumstances of temptation it rises to a passion. It creates an evil thought and issues in an evil deed. Here the Apostle Paul is helping in Colossians, Chapter 3, by saying, "You've got to get down to the root of this deal. You've got to kill covetousness. You've got to deal with the fact that you want to worship God and you want for your life exactly what God wants and nothing else.

Sometimes a person will be in a sexually immoral situation and they'll come for counseling and you'll say to them, "Do you want what God wants in your life? Do you want for you what God wants?" They can't answer it honestly, because if they did they wouldn't be doing that. "No, I want what I want really." "Do you understand the consequences of that? Number one, you forfeit the best. You forfeit the good. You bring on God's judgment." But sometimes the passion is so far gone that even that is not dissuading them from their intention. Covetousness.

Somebody said, "How do you kill covetousness?" I'll tell you how. You kill it with contentedness. You kill covetousness with contentedness. You just learn to say what Paul said. I have learned. "In whatever state I am, therewith to be content." "Contentedness," says God, "for all that you have given me." Thank you. I don't want anything else. God, I don't want any more money. I don't want any person for sexual fulfillment than my wife or my husband. I don't want any more than the singleness that you have given me for this time in my life. And God, about my house and my car and whatever, I don't anything more God than what you've given me. I am content. Contentedness will kill covetousness. You say, "But John, how do you get contentedness?" Well, I'm trying to help you. How do you get contentedness? You get contentedness by trusting God, right? How do you trust God? Get to know Him. The more you know Him the more you will find out that He can be trusted. How do you get to know God? Study His truth, because it reveals Himself.

So Paul says you're going to have to lay the ax at the root and concentrate on God's word. As He reveals Himself you will trust Him. As you see who He is and what He's done for you, you'll begin to

see that you don't deserve any of it, and because you don't deserve any of it then anything you have is glorious and you'll learned a contentedness that says no to covetousness. When you say no to covetousness it can't rise to the rest of those steps and issue and evil deed. Covetousness goes around saying, "God, you cheated me . There's a goody over there." (Laughter) That's what covetousness says. And God graciously and patiently says, "No. I didn't cheat you. No. I gave you richly all things, all that you need."

So that's the first list we've got to deal with. Let's look at Verse 6. Before we get to list two, he stops in the middle, and he gives reasons for spiritual suicide. Why should we kill ourselves in these areas? Two good reasons, he says. Reason number one is very simple. "For which things sake the wrath of God comes." The first reason not to do those things is that God is going to act in judgment. Reason number two is in Verse 7. Incidentally, the last part of Verse 6 in some Scriptures isn't in the better manuscripts. Verse 7 says, "In the which you also once walked," when you lived in it. The second reason is that that's a part of your used-to-be, not a part of your now. Two good reasons. You're going to get in a lot of divine trouble and too, it's inconsistent with your new life. That's your used-to-be.

So let's look at the first one. "Kill these things," he says, "because these are the things the wrath of God comes to." This is God's constant, never changing, ever present reaction against sin. He will deal with it. For an unbeliever comes eternal wrath. For an unbeliever comes the terror of the Lord. Romans 1:18 - "The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all of this." Second Thessalonians, - I couldn't help thinking of that potent Scripture. "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel." They'll be punished with everlasting destruction. The wrath of God comes on these people who do these things. Why as a Christian do you want to do those? Those are the things for which people are damned, not blessed. I mean, think about it. If you really want what you want to meet your needs, if you want to be fulfilled, if you really want to be fulfilled, if you really want to be happy, if you really want what you ought to have, take what God wants to give. You say, "I wantto have this, God. You're cheating me. I'm going to go get." All you're going to go get is something that people are being damned for. It's not worth the effort. Further, I think we have to remind you that believers are being chastened for those things. If, as a Christian, you decide that your covetousness is going to give way and you're going to chase the thing you want in spite of God and you're going to be idolatrous and worship yourself and fulfill your desires, then you have to be ready for consequences, don't you? Because whom the Lord loves he chastens. Every son he scourges.

Read Hebrews 12. It's an important passage. Believe me; the modern attitude of condoning sin isn't going to find any support from the Apostle Paul. God reacts against sin. He always has, He always will. It's only going to be wrath, wrath, wrath. If you choose covetousness and you follow it to its fruition in an evil deed, you bring about the judgment of God. It is inevitable. There is no other way. You are just doing something for which God is going to destroy the world. Why would you want to do

that? Do you not know that the Father wants to give you all the good things? Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father.

The second thing he says - Not only should you kill these things because of what happens to the people who do it and what will happen to you if you do them., We could talk a lot about the consequence to evil. Just read the story of David and his sexual problems and the price he paid. That man had a broken heart the rest of his life. Every one of his children went bad and broke his heart. His own son tried to steal his throne and tried to murder David. There's just consequence. But there's a second reason in Verse 7: "In which you also once walked." When you lived in them. You used to do these things, but that was your used-to-be. That's not your now. That's your former life. That's the old you. I mean, you've been made rich. Why do you want to return to poverty and wallow around in the slime? I guess maybe that's something we ought to think about. I've been delivered from sin. It's pretty stupid to go around and fool with it, isn't it? It's pretty stupid. That's what I've been saved from. When I go back and fool around with it, the consequences are tragic. But here he's saying it's not only going to bring discipline, it just doesn't make sense. He says in Ephesians 2, "You who are dead in trespasses and sins, you who walked formerly in the lust of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, you who wore the sons of disobedience, you who were under the power, the prince of the power, the heir, you have now been transformed. In First Corinthians 6 when he's talking to the Corinthians about their morality ha- says, "It doesn't make sense to do this. You used to be adulterers and you used to be fornicators and you used to be this, but now you're washed and now, you're sanctified. It doesn't make sense." If you're a new creature, how can you act like an old one? I mean, if you're now the slave of Jesus Christ, how can you yield yourself to sin? If you died to the first husband and then married to the new one, Christ, how in the world could you possibly want to be obedient to the one that's dead? It just doesn't make sense.

So he says it doesn't make sense by virtue of the consequence, and it doesn't make sense by virtue of who you are. Then Paul comes to catalog 2, another list of sins in Verse 8. Look at them with me. We're just going to look at these briefly. These are simply. These are very common. I wish we had time to develop them all but we don't. Look what he says in Verse 8 now. Here's list number two. It's a little different. It begins with a motive and moves to the act. These sins are not so personal; they are social. They're not such feeling sins but they're more related to speech. He says, "Now put off all of this, anger, wrath, evil speaking, slander and filthy talk out of your mouth, and lying to each other. He says these are things that have to go. The words "put off" there are very interesting words. They appear again in Verse 9 and then in Verse 10 and 12 "put on." But the "put off" wording here is a word that is used for taking your clothes off. Putting them off. What he's saying is as a man would at the end of a day take off filthy, dirty clothes, so you should discard the rags of your old life. Imagine that the unbeliever is like a beggar; filthy, clothed only in rags, he comes to Christ. He throws away the old and he gets a robe of white righteousness. Then he goes out and finds his rags and puts them back on again. Well, if you have trouble imagining that, you're not examining your own life, because that's precisely what we do, isn't it? So Paul says, "Throw them off!" You know, it's interesting that in

the early church when people were baptized, they would receive after their baptism, they would come in their old clothes, put their clothes off and be baptized in just a small amount of clothing, and afterwards they would be given a new, pure white robe to wear. Maybe, just maybe Paul might be thinking about that. I mean, put off all that old, and put on the new. Throw away your vices like you throw away your old, dirty, filthy clothes. Then he gives another little sample list.

Look at the first one. Anger. This Word means deep down, smoldering, resenting bitterness. Slow burning. This is the angry person. It's always there. Al I you need to do is fan it. This .-.can happen to any of us. There is just a deep anger. There's just somebody we just every time we see them, up it comes. Or every time that same person I've heard people say, "Every time I think of that it makes me furious." Up it comes. It's been smoldering all that time. You ought to think about it more often so you can get it off your chest. "Orgay" is the Greek word. It just has to do with a smoldering, deep down anger. The Bible uses that terms in many places. Then he uses another term. Notice he is moving from deep down out. He starts with that smoldering. You know, one thing I believe salvation ought to do for us is to get rid of that smoldering anger that pops up, that makes you fly off the handle at certain things, that provides for you a reservoir, so that when somebody does what you don't like you can call it up. You know, I like to meet people who don't have that reservoir, do you know that? No matter what you do to them, they never get mad. You know, they're just sweet and loving. You say, "Well maybe -they're really burning inside." Well, maybe they are. But surely there are some people who aren't, who have just gotten rid of that particular problem. Then it gives way to wrath. You'll notice the word "wrath" in Verse 8 is "tumas." That's the blazing thing. -The Greeks said it's like setting a fire in straw. "Tumas" is when you flame, furious'.. You've seen that. It quickly burns out and it's over with. Oh, I know. "He always gets mad but he gets over it real quick." Or somebody goes to it with your spouse. So you go out and mow the lawn and come back. Wonderful. Because it's for your kids or somebody at your job - tumas.

But what Paul is talking about here is that there is a smoldering anger down in the heart of men. Do you know that? Why? I believe in my heart that most people live with a basic resentment. I believe they live with a basic kind of chip on their shoulder because they don't understand why they're here. They didn't ask for this. There's always trouble. They can't answer all the questions. There are problems in their lives, and it just takes certain things to fire it up. One of the things that Christ wants to do is to deal with that basic discontent. Then when that sort of smoldering thing turns into a flaming thing, then it leads to another thing, and that is the word here in Verse 8 "malice." That is "cachia." Perhaps it would be better translated here "evil speaking." Then it comes out of the old mouth. First Peter 2:1 translates it "evil speaking." I think there's one in James 1:21 where you have that "put away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness." Apparently that same term might be in that passage.

But here is the concept that you have a smoldering, resenting anger. It flames itself into a blaze, and out of the mouth it comes. And we're working toward the act. What comes out of the mouth? Verse 8.

Blasphemy. No, that word would best be translated here "slander." In relation to God it's blasphemy. In relationship to men it's often translated slander. But in case you've forgotten about this, every time you slander a man you slander God. Do you know that? Every time you're driving down the road and somebody pulls in front of you and you say, "That stupid, fat-head, idiot," you know, (Laughter) just remember this: God made that stupid fat-head. (Laughter) Now wait a minute. Wait a minute. In His image. You need to understand the dignity of men. In James 3, Verse 9 - "Therewith bless we God," talking about your mouth, you tongue, "Therewith your tongue you bless God, even the Father and therewith curse we men who are made after the similitude of God. Oh one and all, bless the Lord. Praise the Lord. Then you go out the door and say, "That stupid klutz," uhhh .... Look at it this way: when you slander a human being you blaspheme God. Who made that man or that woman? Or when you look at someone disparagingly and you think yourself so wonderful, and when you say, "Look, he's uneducated. Oh, he's stupid. Look at that person. Look at the way he looks. He doesn't know how to dress. He doesn't know how to act."

Matthew 5:22 - "I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of judgment and the only cause is a righteous one. And whoever shall say to his brother 'Rakah shall be in 'danger of the counsel,' but whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire. It's that serious. God is simply saying here that you don't go around calling people fools or using derogatory terms. Don't teach your children to do that. Don't do that. You're disparaging those made in the image of God and you're warping the picture that God wants you to have of dignity of humanity. There's no reason to insult anybody, and an insult leveled at a human being is a shaft aimed at the image of God.

The other day I was at the park and I. was playing football with my little guy Mark and some little kids who were around, a couple of real cute little black kids. We were playing together. They play on Mark's little team and one little kid jumped up and said to those little black kids, "You dirty nigger." I'm telling you, I got shaky inside. I couldn't handle that. Maybe it was because I had a personal affection for those two little kids. But more than that, that just stabbed me. I'm telling you, I was about ready to take that little kid and somebody intervened, or I would given him some theology that he never would have been able to handle (Laughter). If he had said, "You dirty whitey," -it would have been the same to me. But you see, there's a little guy who is 8 years old who is raised in a family where that is the kind of living he's used to. Don't do that. It's hard enough, people, to get this licked, isn't it? Don't impose your hatred on them as if this is right? It isn't right. People are to be thought of with dignity because they are made in the image of God. Don't bless God with your mouth and curse those people made in his image. Obviously I still haven't gotten over that. I'm still waiting for the moment to talk to that little guy. Then there is another thing that issues in an evil deed, and that is in verseand it's not onlygoing to be slander, but what's going to come up out of this angry, wrathful, evil speaking is not only going to be slander but it's going to be filthy communication. This in the Greek means "obscene language." It is the same that is talked of in Ephesians 4:29, rotten talk, "Saprose." Rotten. Ephesians 4:29 says, "If you're going to say something, say what is edifying, say what is necessary or

keep your mouth shut." Say what is edifying, necessary and gracious and don't say anything else. There is no reason for filthy communication. Believe me, Jesus was right and He said this in Matthew 12 - "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things. An evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." When I hear that I say, "That's an evil man." Why? That's what Jesus said. Because good men don't speak that way. Check your own talk.

Then he says there is a last thing that issues from this particular kind of angry, resenting thing, not only slander but that kind of filthy talk that really is deriding and derogatory and slanderous in itself. It demeans the human body. It demeans God's beautiful design of sex. It turns it into something filthy. He said there is on& other thing that issues out of this kind of heart and that is lying. In Verse 9 He says "Stop lying to each other." This goes back to the Ten Commandments too, and lying is a problem. I'm telling you, if you want to have an interesting study start in Genesis and find every lie in the Bible. Then tell me three years from now how many there are. I quit before I ever got out of Genesis. Satan lied in deceiving Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve lied to God attempting to evade responsibility. Cain lied to God about his brother. Abraham lied about Sarah. Sarah lied to the angels. Sarah lied to the King of Gurar. Isaac lied, denying Rebecca was his wife, Rebecca and Isaac lied in the conspiracy against Esah and I said, "I've had enough.'" And I'm not even through Genesis. Jesus said in John 8:44 that Satan is the father of lies. Tell the truth, people. If believers can't speak the truth, who in the world can? Paul is horrified that a Christian would speak slander, that a Christian would speak filthy talk or that a Christian would lie. He says, "These are the things that you've got to kill." There's no place. Jesus said, "Out of the heart of the issues life." James spoke of bitter and sweet words out of the same mouth. Paul says, "A foul mouth, a filthy speech, a slanderous speech, a lying mouth is repulsive." You know, you'd almost think', "Boy John. This is awful elementary for people whose life is hidden with Christ in God. It is, isn't it? This is awful elementary for those who have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly." Do you really have to say this to people who are complete in Christ? But let's face it, beloved. Such is the battle, huh?

You say, "But John, how do I handle these things? How do I kill them? How do I get rid of them?" Well, how do you kill sin? I can give you two ways. Number one, starve it. "Well, what do you man by that?" Don't feed it. In other words, feed you r mind something else. Don't feed it trash. Don't feed your anger. Don't feed your resentment. Don't feed your sexual desire. Don't feed your covetousness. You know, years ago when we didn't have so much, people on the farm would sit there and drool over the Sears catalog. Maybe it's changed a little bit but it isn't much different. Now we buy magazines and magazines and magazines and drool over all the goodies. We go window shopping, checking out the new models. You know. Starve it. Don't feed it; don't feed any of those urges. Don't feed your covetousness and don't feed that resentment. Don't give it any thing to eat. That's the negative. The positive is to crowd it out with positive graces. Just pour into your mind the word of Christ, the things that are good, the things that are right. That will make the difference.

Let's pray. Father we know that all of this really gets down to the practical area of whether we're controlled by your spirit or by our own spirit, the human spirit. Father, we would yield to the Holy Spirit. We would desire to dwell in the word of God, so that the word of God just crowds our mind and there just isn't anything else that can fit in. There's just too much Scripture for covetousness. There is too much of your word for anger, resentment, and smoldering bitterness. That's all been pushed out, starved out, for lack of feeling. Thank you for already winning the victory and help us to claim it. Thank You for already killing us as it were on the Cross and giving us new life and now, help us to learn what it is to commit spiritual suicide in a practical way and put to death these things that we might live as Paul said - righteously and godly in this present day. For your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).