

Colossians 3:5-6

- Paul has finished his theological portion of the letter that focused on attacking the false philosophies that had crept into the Christian teaching in Colossae. Paul had countered this false teaching with his presentation of True Christology and Soteriology (Christ and salvation).
- How does a Christian “seek the things above” and “set the mind on the things above?”
 - Here the answer involves not seeking and not doing the things of the earth by putting to death and putting away the old, sinful practices and putting on the new virtues.
 - Notice “seeking” and “thinking” about things above does NOT involve visions, emotions and mystical experiences! This was the practice of the vain philosophies in Colossae.
- Four key phrases from early Church catechesis begin the following paragraphs of thought:
 - “put to death” (3:5)
 - “put on” (3:12)
 - “be subject” (3:18)
 - “watch and pray” (4:2)(see more in Romans 6:11-7:6 and Romans 8:11-18)
- Vice/Virtue Lists
 - Vices listed in the NT:
 - Romans 1:25-31
 - Romans 13:13
 - 1 Corinthians 5:10-11
 - Ephesians 5:3-4
 - 1 Timothy 1:9-10
 - 1 Timothy 6:4-5
 - 1 Peter 4:3
 - Virtues listed in the NT:
 - 2 Corinthians 6:6-7
 - Galatians 5:22-23
 - Ephesians 4:2-3
 - Philippians 4:8
 - 1 Timothy 3:2
 - The best the OT has to compare to this is:
 - Proverbs 6:17-19;
 - Jeremiah 7:9;
 - Hosea 4:2
 - The Ten Commandments
 - In Greek/Roman culture of the NT times the literature and philosophers had developed vice/virtue lists that may have given form to the NT style seen here in Colossians
 - The four cardinal virtues of Hellenism (Greek culture) promoted by the Stoic philosophers were:
 - Wisdom
 - manliness
 - self-control
 - righteousness
 - The corresponding vices were also four in number:
 - Folly

- Cowardice
- Intemperance
- Injustice
- It is interesting to note that never are the four Hellenistic vices repeated in the NT lists.
- And, Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit is unique and not duplicated in secular philosophy of his day.
- It may be that Paul and the NT writers develop their list with help from the Old Testament.
- Consider that Leviticus taught sexual morality and addressed anger, wrath, malice, love in the holiness Code found in Leviticus 17-26.
- The writing and teaching of the Qumran community may also have helped develop the concept of lists.
- If Paul is developing OT ideas with these two lists in Colossians 3:5-10, we can see his use of the Ten Commandments (idolatry) and the Leviticus Holiness Code which basically tells the Colossians to reject the false teaching (idolatry) and its immorality and pursue the character of God, who is their Father, by being holy as he is holy with their new nature (or, new life).
- List One of five vices – Colossians 3:5 – IDOLATRY – sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed
- List Two of five vices – Colossians 3:8 - SINS OF THE MOUTH – anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk
 - And, maybe a sixth in 3:9...Do not lie to each other.

Colossians 3:5 – **“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”**

1. “Therefore” – (*oun*) Paul builds on the previous words which were to focus and desire Christ and the “things above” (not mystical, magical stuff, but things of God’s nature and God’s ways.)
2. “Put to death” –
 - a. this is based on the previously stated fact that “you have died.” So, now bring your actions in line.
 - b. These things have already been stated to be true:
 - i. We have been delivered from the dominion of darkness (1:13)
 - ii. We participate in Christ’s death (2:11-12)
 - iii. God has already disarmed the rulers and authorities. Jesus has already triumphed over them (2:14-15)
 - c. In this scenario we are told in the imperative (mood of command) to “put to death”
 - d. We hear the same attitude in Romans 6:6-7 and 6:11-12, “...therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.”
3. “earthly” – these are the things of the earth, the earthly things or the things that are NOT “things above.”
4. The first 5 of the 10 vices listed by Paul deal with sexual sin.
 - a. **sexual immorality, *porneia*** –
 - i. any sex outside of marriage.
 - ii. This is any unrestrained sexual behavior.

- iii. Associated with idol worship in the OT (Isaiah 47:10; Jer. 3:9; Ezek.23:8; Mic. 1:7)
- iv. When Paul introduced this concept it was a new virtue to the ancient world, specifically to the Greek/Roman world.
- b. **impurity**, Phillips paraphrased NT translates this as “dirty-mindedness.”
 - i. In the OT this was manifest in two ways:
 - 1. Ceremonially impure concerning ritual worship;
 - 2. sexual immorality.
 - ii. Paul uses impurity to refer to sexual immorality in:
 - 1. Rom. 1:24 – “
 - 2. 2 Cor. 12:21 – “
 - 3. Gal.5:19 – “
- c. **passion**, *pathos*, (“lust”)
 - i. here it refers to lust and uncontrolled shameful passions. The focus is again on domination of a person by sexual desires and sexual drive.
 - ii. Paul uses this to refer to the behavior of “the pagans who do not know God in:
 - 1. 1 Thes. 4:5 – “
 - 2. Rom. 1:26 – “
- d. **evil desire**, *epithumian kaken*
 - i. used to refer to:
 - 1. general sinful desires:
 - a. Romans 6:12 – “
 - b. Romans7:8 – “
 - c. Romans 13:14 – “
 - d. Galatians 5:16 – “
 - 2. illicit sexual desires:
 - a. Romans 1:24 – “
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:5 – “
- e. **greed**, *pleonexian*, *pleion*,
 - i. A Greek word made by combining two Greek words:
 - 1. The first meaning “more”
 - 2. The second being *echein* meaning “to have”
 - 3. Together they form this word which means “desire to have more”
 - ii. This word naturally leads to the next statement – “which is idolatry” – in this case it could refer to these things:
 - 1. The desire to have more spiritual insight and more revelation than what the Lord gave. Thus, in context, mysticism is idolatry.
 - 2. Or, if it stays with the theme of sexual sin, to want more sex in illicit ways is idolatry.
- 5. “which is idolatry”
 - a. Anything that interferes with our relationship with God, his Spirit, the life and it’s source of power “is idolatry” because it gets in the way of allowing God’s nature and our new life to flow, grow and show.
- 6. The lists of vices:
 - a. This first list of five vices ends with a description of these five vices as being identified with “idolatry”

- b. The second list of six vices seen below also ends with a description of the list of vices. These are identified as sins “from your lips” or “from your mouth.”

3:6 – **“On account of these the wrath of God is coming.”**

1. “On account of these”
2. “the wrath of God” – this was an OT concept Zeph. 1:14-15
3. “is coming” –
 - a. Paul spoke of the wrath of God being revealed in time or in his own day as in Romans 1:18-32, “The wrath of God IS being revealed from heaven.....”
 - b. Paul also spoke of the wrath of God being revealed at the end of time at the final judgment as in Romans 2:5 – “because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.”
 - c. Eschatological Wrath in:
 - i. Romans 5:9 - “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”
 - ii. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – “...and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”
 - iii. Romans 2:7-8
4. In light of Paul having just spoken about the day Christ’s glory is revealed it is fitting that Paul is talking about the pouring out of God’s wrath in the final judgment.