

## The Doctrine of Mortification

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

Colossians 3:5

This chapter contains divers exhortations unto heavenly mindedness by which the apostle labors to dissuade the Colossians from corruptible things unto things that are not corruptible but everlasting; not earthly, but heavenly; in the which the life of a Christian, and true holiness stands.

In the first verse he begins with an exhortation to seek heavenly things. “If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above.” That is, if you are risen with Christ and dead unto the fashions of men, then there is an alteration and change in your souls wrought by which you are brought to affect that which is heavenly and to basely esteem earthly things. Therefore, “if you be risen,” that is, if this heavenly life, disposition, and change is in you then let the same appear by your heavenly mindedness, that is, by seeking heavenly things.

In the second verse he joins another exhortation grounded on the first, to be wise and to understand them. “Set your affections on things above,” that is, let them be specially minded of you; let all your faculties be filled with a knowledge of spiritual things. And this is so joined with the former that there can be no seeking without knowing; for how can a man seek that which he does not know? And if you have no knowledge of heaven and heavenly things, how can you desire them? Seeing where there is no desire there is no seeking; and therefore, if you would seek heavenly

things, such as Christ, grace, and salvation, then you must know them first.

Afterwards, in the third verse, he goes on and presses this exhortation with divers arguments. First, because “you are dead,” that is, seeing you are dead unto earthly things, therefore strive now to not be earthly minded. Second, “your life is hid with Christ,” that is, your happiness is not seen with the eye of the body by looking on these earthly things, but your happiness and joy is by faith beholding Christ. Therefore, set your heart and eye on Him where your life is; that is, you look for a perfection of glory with Christ which you cannot have by minding earthly things. Therefore, be heavenly minded.

In the fourth verse the apostle answers a possible objection. “You tell us that we shall have a perfection of glory, and that it is hid with Christ, but when shall we have it? When shall it be made manifest unto us?”

Unto this the apostle answers, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.” And hereupon he grounds another exhortation in the verse I have read. It is as if he should say, “Seeing you expect such a perfection of glory to be revealed unto you at Christ’s second coming, then it stands you to set upon your corruptions, to kill and to slay those that seek to deprive you of that glory. Mortify therefore your earthly members,” that is, slay every foul affection, every inordinate desire of earthly things; rid your hearts of them by slaying of them. And although it may seem a hard work yet fight still or else you shall never attain unto that life you hope for. So the first general point hence, is this;

**DOCTRINE 1. The height of glory that we expect by Christ should cause every man to mortify sin.**

The apostle makes this the ground of our mortification. “If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, mortify therefore your earthly members,” that is, unless you slay sin that has slain Christ you cannot get life with Christ. Surely, then, mortification is not as men think it is, a