

*Christ over All:
Paul's Letter to
the Colossians*

“Putting Sin
to Death,”
Part 2

Colossians 3:5–11



THE NATURE OF PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

Progressive Sanctification

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graph TD; A[Progressive Sanctification] --> B[Separation from sin]; A --> C[Consecration to God]; B --> D["Mortification  
(\"Put off\")  
Colossians 3:5-11"]; C --> E["Vivification  
(\"Put on\")  
Colossians 3:12-17"];
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Separation from sin

Mortification
("Put off")

Colossians 3:5-11

Consecration to God

Vivification
("Put on")

Colossians 3:12-17

COLOSSIANS 3:5–11

“Therefore **consider** the members of your earthly body **as dead** to I
immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to
idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come
upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when
you were living in them. But now you also, **put** them all **aside**; II
anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. **Do not lie** to one III
another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put
on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the
image of the One who created him — *a renewal* in which there is no
distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised,
barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.”

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS 3:5–11

- I. Mortify Your Immoral Habits (vv. 5–7)
- II. Discard Your Hateful Expressions (v. 8)
- III. Forsake Your Deceitful Speech (vv. 9–11)

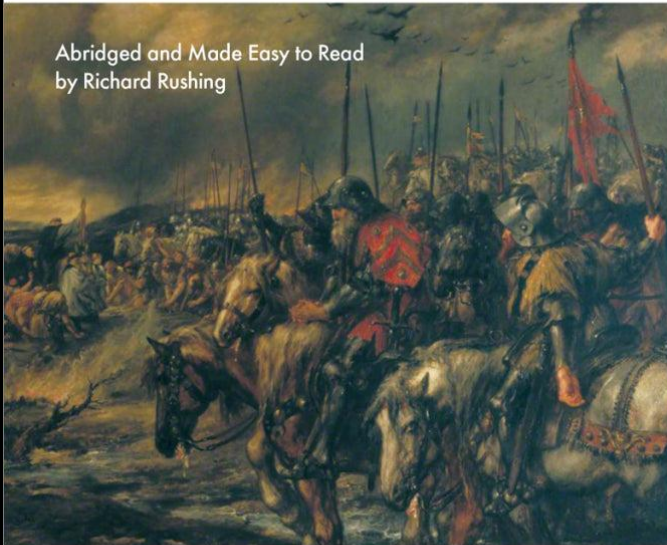
PUTTING SIN
TO DEATH

- Paul's list of sins to *mortify* or to *put off* is not exhaustive but paradigmatic.
- Yet, these three categories of sin do tend to be the most characteristic of fallen humanity—and the most destructive.

The Mortification of Sin

John Owen

Abridged and Made Easy to Read
by Richard Rushing



PURITAN  PAPERBACKS

“Every unmortified sin will certainly do two things; first, it will weaken the soul, and deprive it of its vigor; secondly, it will darken the soul, and deprive it of its comfort and peace.”

—John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*, 48–49

I. Mortify Your Immoral Habits (3:5–7)

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.”

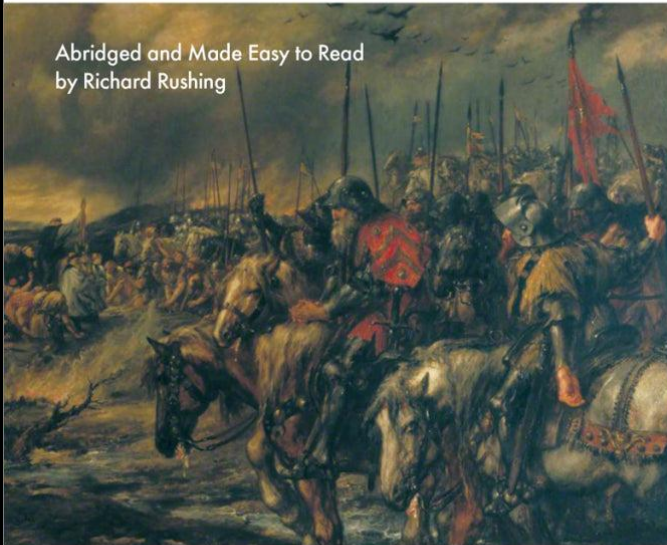
A. The Basis of the Command (v. 5a)

- **“Therefore”** – this next paragraph (vv. 5–11) with its three imperatives is the logical *outcome* of the previous section (vv. 1–4).
- Theology is always practical, but the indicative → imperative sequence is crucial to understand.

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“Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world.”

—John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*, 22

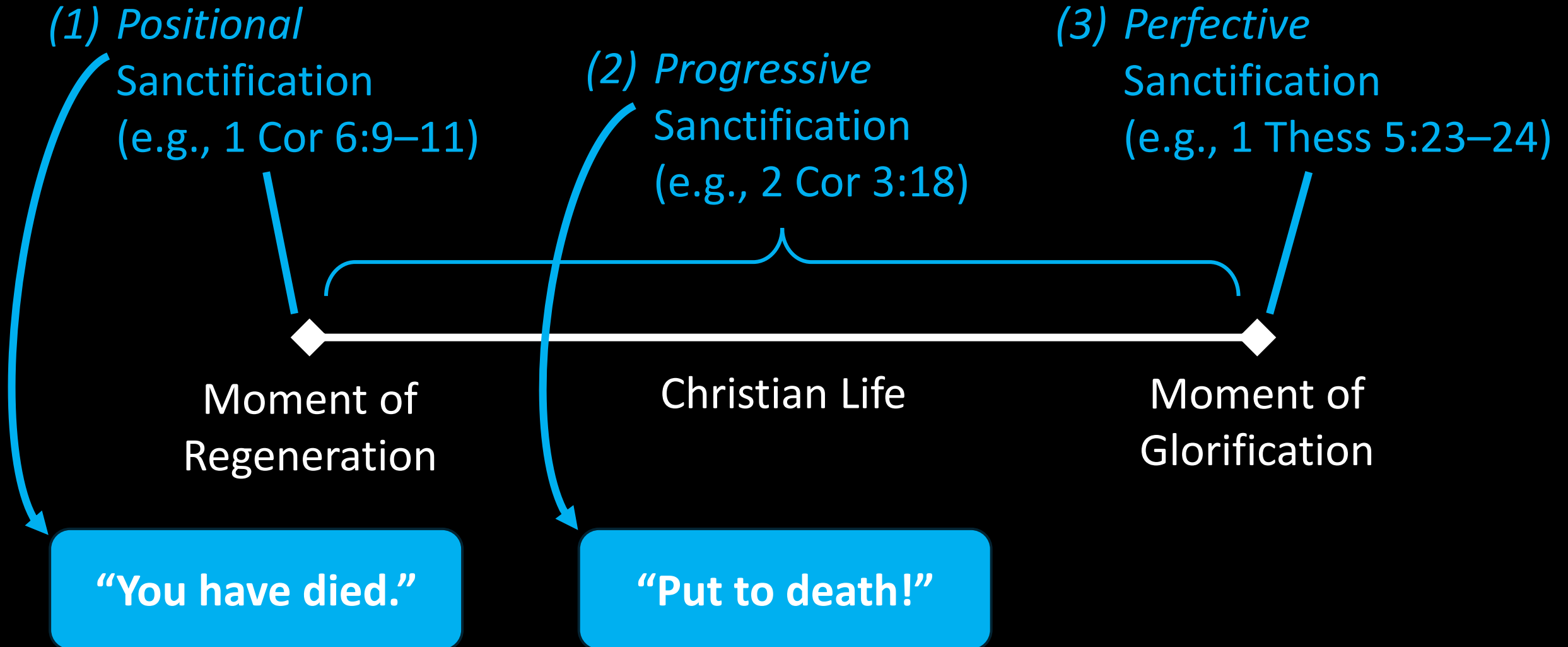
“Therefore **consider **the members of your earthly body** **as dead** to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.”**

B. The Substance of the Command (v. 5a)

- **“Consider as dead”** – literally, “put to death” (ESV); “to deaden or cause to cease completely”; the word from which we get *necrosis*.
 - The term indicates the ruthlessness with which we are to act.
- **“the members of your earthly body”** – not in the literal sense (which leads to asceticism—see 2:20–23), but in the *figurative* sense—put to death *the corrupted elements of the sinful flesh that yearn for sin*.

- **Question:** But is this not a contradiction? Paul already stated that believers “have died”!
 - **Colossians 2:20** – “If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees . . .”
 - **Colossians 3:3** – “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”
- **Answer:** The believer exists in *two realities*—(1) the reality of his *positional* sanctification (“dead to sin” // “complete in Christ”); and (2) the reality of his *progressive* sanctification (“put to death . . .”).
- Believers have been definitively set apart from sin’s *bondage*, but they are not yet free from its *presence*—even in their own bodies.

THE THREE STAGES OF SANCTIFICATION



“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.”

C. The Focus of the Command (v. 5b)

- Paul lists five *sexual sins*, beginning with the most overt and ending with the most secret; acted upon or imagined, they are sinful.
- 1) **“Immorality”** – a broad term covering a wide spectrum of overt forms of sexual sin; all activity outside of heterosexual, monogamous marriage—fornication, adultery, homosexuality, etc. (see 1 Cor 6:18; 1 Thess 4:3).

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.”

- 2) “Impurity”** – another broad term like the first but emphasizing the *vile nature* of this sin more than its particular expression (see Rom 1:24).
- 3) “Passion”** – a less overt term; the internal drive that leads to the external activity (see Rom 1:26).
- 4) “Evil desire”** – a term like the previous, but perhaps even more internal and invisible; “lust”—the desire for the forbidden (see Matt 5:28).

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and **greed, which amounts to **idolatry**. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.”**

5) “Greed” – literally, “to have more”; the state of never being satisfied, of always yearning for more; evident esp. in sexual sin (see Eph 4:19; 5:3).



- **“Idolatry”** – the worship of false gods; the definition of “greed.”
- “Covetousness is idolatry because it involves the setting of one’s affections on earthly things and not on things above, and therefore the putting of some other object of desire in the place which God should occupy in his people’s hearts” (F. F. Bruce).

“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints [‘sanctified ones’] For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

—Ephesians 5:3, 5

“No sin that a person commits has more built-in pitfalls, problems and destructiveness than sexual sin. It has broken more marriages, shattered more homes, caused more heartache and disease, and destroyed more lives than alcohol and drugs combined. It causes lying, stealing, cheating and killing, as well as bitterness, hatred, slander, gossip and unforgiveness.”

—John MacArthur, *First Corinthians*, 147



Application

- ✓ You can only fight sin successfully if you are already *in Christ* (Col 3:1–4).
- ✓ Your fight against sin—and the sins listed in 3:5 in particular—is to be *ruthless*. It involves *putting to death!*
- ✓ Sexual sin is not only defined by outward actions, but also by inward desires (Matt 5:28); its mortification must take aim at both.

