

Small Groups

- I want to encourage you to get involved in a Small Group
- The Christian life was never intended to be lived by yourself
 - This morning we are going to be looking Scripture that challenges us to battle against our sin.
 - It was never intended to be solo battle.
 - We need other people who are resting in the gospel to walk through life with us.
 - Other people need you to pour your life into theirs.
- Our lives are to be centered on Jesus Christ and we need the fellowship, the accountability, and the confidence that comes from doing life with other brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.
- Small Groups/Home Fellowships are an important part of your spiritual growth and I want to invite you to participate if you aren't already. You need godly friends and others need you to encourage them to have a Jesus Centered Life.

Well, let's go ahead and turn our attention to the book of Colossians. As I said last week, chapters 1 and 2 lay out the foundation of the supremacy of Jesus Christ and it also lays out who we are in Jesus Christ. And we've turned the corner into the practical section of the book that addresses how we are to live in accordance with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives. I've entitled this morning's message, **The Jesus Centered Life** and we're going to deal with it in two parts. Next week we will look at verses 12-17 that tell us to "put on" new characteristics and to pursue new behaviors that match up to our new life. But this week we will be studying verses 5-11 that command us to "put to death" and "put away" what is earthly within us.

The verses that we will be looking at today dictate that we must take sin seriously. If you are going to grow in maturity as a believer in Jesus Christ, you must go to war against your sin. For there is no growth in a life where sin runs unchecked. So let's go ahead and read this passage together, and then we'll talk our way through it.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

I only have one point this morning, **The Jesus Centered Life Kills Sin.**

There is a violent and aggressive nature to the Christian life where we are to be taking the sin that has rooted itself in our life and putting it to death. Paul is very direct here as he opens this verse by saying put to death, or as some of your translations may say, mortify what is earthly in you. If you remember last week we studied verses 1-4 and we talked about the new identity we have in Christ, we have been raised with Christ.

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

We talked about living according to our new identity. Living with that new identity involves the process of killing the old life in a practical way. Let me pause here, because I want to clarify something. Positionally, the old life has been killed already. 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 new life 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 live that out in a practical way and that involves the practical killing of some features of that old life that wants to hang on. So in a spiritual sense in one way, you have already "put to death." You voluntarily came to Jesus. You voluntarily confessed your sin. You voluntarily died with Christ, as it says there in Colossians 3:3. And in coming to Christ for salvation, you said "death to the old life. Death to the old nature."

So positionally, you have already "put to death." Jesus told us in Luke 9:23

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Our following of Jesus leads to a death. We die to our own desires and ambitions. We die to our ego. We die to our own pride. And we say, "Christ is all and He is Lord and I submit completely to Him." We say all of that at the moment of salvation and that changes our position before God, but practically speaking there are some actions that we must take to live in accordance with the new position that we have. We've come to understanding that redemption is found exclusively in Christ, we've set our mind on things above; but how am I to be putting to death what is earthly in me?

It first starts with a daily commitment. Jesus told us to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:31,

I die every day!

There is a commitment to eliminate everything in the believer's life that is contrary to godliness. If you have a garden, and you care about it, you know what it's like to go out there consistently to pull out the weeds that keep sprouting to the surface. A garden full of weeds will do harm to whatever you're trying to grow. Weeds will compete with your vegetables for space; weeds will contend with your flowers for nutrients; so you are diligent to uproot them. In the same way, sin slows the progress of a Christian's maturity. And sin is like a dethroned king; it doesn't reign any longer in a believer's life, it does not have the ability to condemn, but it works hard to disable and destroy all who are in contact with it. So because we are a new creature in Christ, because we have a new identity in Him and because we are

already are citizens of Heaven, we must commit to daily putting to death what is earthly in us.

The puritan, John Owens, put it really well when he asks the question;

Do you mortify? Do you make it your daily work? Be always at it [while] you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.

Sin is an enemy that you cannot take lightly and simply hope for it to not entangle your life. You rise every morning and intentionally seek to put it to death. And throughout Scripture, sin is not described in vague terms. We don't need to go through life completely confused about what is sin and what is not sin. The Bible, in so many different places gets very specific on what sin is. And here within our passage, the Apostle Paul lays out a couple of different list of specific sins. I want to state the obvious; the list of sins within this passage is not exhaustive. It does not list every sin that there is. But it gives us a sample of sins, in two different lists that are common among us still today.

One list is in verse 5, and the other is in verse 8. In between there is an explanation for why the Christian shouldn't continue indulging in their sin. 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, speaks about wicked kinds of hate. So they really contrast each other but both address specific actions of our life that must be uprooted and killed.

I think the way that the list are structured is somewhat interesting. What you will see as we look at them is that the first list begins with actions and moves to motives. Then the second list begins with motives and moves toward the actions. The first list is personal and for the most part private. The second is social and observed by all we come in contact with.

Let's look at that first list in verse 5. These are things that we have to put to death. They are personal, and I would say that for the most part that these sins are committed in private, but they never have a private effect or individual effect. When you sin it does impact you, but it also has strong effects on the people that you're surrounded by. In this list he moves from the actual sin itself backwards to the motive. Notice the sequence as we're told to kill these things: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. First you have the evil action, sexual sin. Then impurity, evil actions take place because of impurity. Impurity means "an unholy affection." And an unholy affection comes from a perverted passion or desire of the heart. That all comes out of the core of the individual, which is covetousness. It wants what is forbidden, wanting what is not ours. What it really boils down to is that mankind is idolatrous, because whenever you say, "I want what I want," no matter what God says, you are worshiping yourself instead of Him. At the core of all sin is a sinful desire. I want to talk about that a little more in just a minute, but first let's talk about each word in this list.

At the top of this list we see the action of sexual impurity. This refers to ungodly sexual relationships. It goes beyond just a man and a woman in a relationship, and it would cover any unlawful sexual relationship. If you study your Bible and you go all the way through and underline God's response toward sexual sin, you would see that it is very serious. In the Old Testament, this kind of evil was punished with death. God may respond towards mankind a little more graciously in this time period, but God's attitude hasn't changed. Any sin in the area of sex needs to be killed; it needs to be put to death. God forbids any sexual activity outside of marriage. Any sexual activity.

That sexual immorality flows out of impurity. Look at that second term, impurity. That refers to our thoughts, our filthy thoughts, and our filthy intentions. That's what Jesus was addressing in Matthew 5:28 when He said, "that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." It's a sinful thought that is behind a sinful action. Adultery, fornication, sexual impurity comes from the evil thought pattern.

In the Apostle Paul's day, it was not much different than our own. What he was saying to them was countercultural for to them, a relationship outside of marriage was not a big deal. There was no stigma to it. They could do whatever they wanted to do and their society didn't really care. Does that sound much different than our own? You could tell someone that you believe that God created sex to be enjoyed exclusively within the confines of a marriage relationship and a lot of people in our culture would look at you like you're crazy.

But that should be expected. Shouldn't it? There is no way that an individual who does not know Christ and does not have the Holy Spirit indwelling in them and teaching them truth to think any different than the world system that they are immersed in. They have no motive to obey Scripture. They will think exactly what the world system thinks. This is why we're told in Romans 12 to not just go along with the world's way of thinking.

Romans 12:2 says,

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

And the sinful activity of sexual impurity flows out sinful thoughts. You keep tracking the sinful activity upstream it flows from impurity, from misplaced passion, from evil desire and ultimately at the source, as you see there in verse 5, you will find covetousness. It is the evil root from which all the previous sins spring. This is desire to have more.

As I said already, at the core of all sin is a sinful desire. We can never say, "the devil made me do it." We can never simply blame another person or blame a situation for the sin that we commit. Because ultimately whenever we sin, we do what we do

because we want what we want. Our sinful actions begin with our sinful desires. I do what I do because I want what I want. Would you guys repeat that with me? I do what I do because I want what I want.

And here we sin in verse 5 that it's a wanting of something that's not mine. It's coveting. And the antidote for covetousness is contentment. It's trusting God with what He has given to you already. Contentment is not something that comes naturally. It would be amazing if children were born into this world content, but they're not. It's something that we all have to learn and become dependent on the Holy Spirit to teach us.

Paul would say in Philippians 4:11-13

I have *learned* in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have *learned* the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. (But) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

The life that is centered on Jesus and is actively putting sin to death, is learning to be content in all things. It is a life that is learning to thank God for anything and everything that He places in your life. It's a desire of the heart that says I don't want anything else. God, I don't want any more money than what you've given me. I don't want any person for sexual fulfillment other than my wife or my husband. God, I don't want any more than the singleness that you have given me for this time in my life. God, I am thankful for my house, my car, my job, or whatever else, I don't want anything more God than what you've given me. God I trust You that you have given me exactly what I need, and I am content. Contentment is your weapon to put covetousness to death.

The sin that rages against you can be defeated and the beauty of the gospel is that this is not something that you have to battle on your own. We as a church want to battle alongside of each other, that's one of the reasons I brought up small groups at the beginning of this message. But God in His sovereignty also knows your weakness. And God in His grace grants us the strength to change. Paul's prayer, back in Colossians 1:11, was that this body of believers would be strengthened with all power, according to God's glorious might... and that's applicable to us as well as we desperately dependent on the power of God to put to death the sin that is within us. Thanks be to God that we don't have to battle our sin on our own. He is faithful to give us the strength to endure as we center our life on Christ and seek to live a life that is worthy of His name.

Well... we have covered one-verse so far... six verses to go. OK, I'm not going to go into as much detail in the rest of these verses but I do want to make a few comments. Let's jump down to that second list that is found in verses 8 and 9. And then we'll jump back up into verses 6 and 7 to close.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:8-9

This list has a lot to do with anger and how we interact with other people. Believers in Christ are supposed to “be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” But this is not always the case, and sometimes we make it acceptable because we make excuses as to why we get angry. We say, of course I’ve got a short fuse, I’m Irish. Or I come from a long line of yellers. Or if you had to live around this person or work with this person, than you’d be angry too. But those are excuses.

At the core of our frustration is that we want to be the center of the universe and when things don’t go according to the way that we want them to go we get angry, we get frustrated, and like smoldering lava below the surface we are on the verge of a volcanic explosion. So God, by his grace puts you in a situation where you learn that you are not the center of it all. He gives you a job where you’re going to have to work alongside of other people. God puts you in a classroom where the teacher doesn’t do things just the way you like them. He gives you the opportunity to live alongside of other sinners.

I’ve heard the saying that when you get married, you learn how selfish you are. But when you have kids, you learn how angry you are. Our spouse didn’t make us selfish, our kids don’t make us angry... they’re just instruments to reveal the sin that is already there within us. Those moments where sin raises its ugly head, we must remind ourselves that it is Jesus who is at the center of our life... not ourselves. We don’t have a right to be angry when someone does something we don’t like, when they don’t match up to our preferences. We must not abuse people with our foolish outbursts. People are to be treated with dignity, respect and love because they are made in the image of God. So we must be diligently at work to put off this sin as well.

In closing, let’s jump back up to verses 6 and 7.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:6-7

Sin brings God’s judgment. God’s wrath is His eternal hatred of all unrighteousness. It is the displeasure and fury of the Almighty God against sin. It is the holiness of God stirred into action against everything unholy. God will react toward sin. The unbeliever will experience His eternal wrath and that is something to be terrified of. We are motivated to keep Jesus Christ at the center of our life because Jesus Christ went to the cross so that through faith in Him we will not have to experience the wrath of God.

We live now in accordance with what He wants us to do. We don’t go back to the old life as if it ever had something to offer us. No. We’ve been given life in Christ. So until the day we die, we grow dependent on Him, and daily put to death the sin that is within us.