

Dealing with Sin - Colossians 3:1-14

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[0 : 00] So, Colossians chapter 3, reading from verse 1 to verse 14. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now, you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which has been renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.

Here, there is neither Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free. But Christ is all, and is in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

[1 : 51] Bear with each other, and forgive one another. If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you.

And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let's pray before Alex comes to speak from the word.

Lord, we are blessed by the reading of your word, Lord Jesus. We thank you for the evident truth that it has.

Whether we are a believer or not, Father, its truthfulness and its honesty and its helpfulness shines through. And Lord, we thank you now for Alex, who you have blessed with many gifts.

And we thank you that he is able to come and teach us now from your word, to preach your word, to speak into our hearts the word of God. Be gracious to him. Lord, help us to listen well through the power of the Spirit.

[2 : 55] Amen. Well, good morning, everyone.

As Ralph said, our summer series is based on the Christian life. And so today, we will mainly, but not totally, be dealing with the issue of dealing with sin.

I want to make this as simple as possible for us all. So that we can go out and put it into practice straight away. We will look at three main points.

Some in more depth than others. So if you're taking notes, these are the three main points. Spoiler alert. The main points are, when dealing with sin, we need to look up, we need to put off, and we need to put on.

Just before I continue, everybody at the back and the front, can you hear me okay? I haven't got a microphone. Good. So first, look up.

[4 : 17] Let's read chapter 3 again, verse 1 to 3. Since then, you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ and God. Set your minds on things above, it says.

By looking up, or setting our minds on things above, we will think, meditate, and wrestle with the things of God.

As we think about sin, we will meditate on Christ's saving work on the cross on our behalf. Let's try and understand first what sin is and what its consequences are.

Kevin DeYoung, the author and theologian, describes sin like this. He says that the Bible makes it clear that sin is both a condition, inherited from Adam, and an action, manifesting itself in thought, word, and deed.

[5 : 33] That when fully grown, gives birth to death. Very simply, sin is lawlessness. It means that we've broken God's commands and have fallen short of his glory.

But it actually goes much deeper than just missing the mark. Sin is idolatry. Look again at verse 5.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.

Sin is worshipping false gods or idols. Whether these gods are overt and physical, like actions, or whether they're more subtle and internal, like thoughts or attitudes.

Idols aren't necessarily bad things as such. Idols can very often be good things, which we have made to be ultimate things.

[6 : 44] Sin can also be considered adultery, which is seeking for other sources of satisfaction and meaning other than God.

As we trace sin through the Bible, from Adam to Abraham, from Lot to Laban, from Joseph to Judah, I didn't get as far as dead.

We see that sin is a big problem. And human beings are clearly not the solution. Kevin de Jong again puts it like this.

Every sin, no matter how private or quiet, is an affront to the holiness, goodness, and kindness of God.

This is what David meant in Psalm 51, verse 4, when, after he committed adultery and murder, and tried to cover both of them up, he confessed to God.

[8 : 08] He says, Against you, you only have I sinned. God is ultimately the one we have offended.

When we sin. As a result, sin cannot be without consequences. God is a God of justice. And in the end, every sin and sinner must face consequences.

God would be less than God, and sin would be something less than sin, if the Lord allowed our treacherous disobedience to go unnoticed and unchecked. It is clear that sin must be paid for.

The good news is that Jesus deals with our sin by becoming sin for us. He conquers the God-defiant wretchedness of sin by divine satisfaction through divine self-substitution.

The truth is that we are sinful. And no matter how hard we try not to be, we are still sinners.

[9 : 14] And as a result, the punishment for sin is death. God has seen our desperate state and the state of our heart, and has decided to do something about it.

Sin is so serious, that only death can satisfy or pay the cost. That's why verse 6, or that's what verse 6 means when it says that the wrath of God is coming.

The wrath of God is defined as the divine attribute by which God intensely hates sin, and is poised and ready to punish it fully. For forgiveness, leading to salvation from God's wrath to occur, his anger must be satisfied.

So Jesus took the wrath of God on himself, on the cross, and as a result, Christians will never face the wrath of God.

But if you don't believe, you will experience God's fury in eternal judgment and punishment. So our sin is our thoughts, our words, or our deeds, that separate us from full union with God.

[10 : 34] And Christ's death on the cross is what brings us back to God. Once we have realised what we have been saved from, God's wrath, it is easier then to see what we have been saved for.

Look with me at verse 3 and 4. For you died, for you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ and God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. It is easier to see what we have been saved for.

To be hidden with Christ in God, to appear with him in glory. This is what we are to set our minds on. To set our minds on things above is to think about what we have been saved from and what we have been saved for.

How can we think about these things or meditate on them if we neglect to go to the source of them? We know these things because the Bible tells us about them.

[11 : 46] To meditate on things above is the original mindfulness. Filling our minds with good things and good truth. It is filling our minds with God's truth and the good news of saving faith through Jesus Christ.

Similarly, as we set our hearts on things above, our hearts will yearn for the things of God and not for ourselves.

If we love our jobs, or see our identity in what we do, or if we love our spouse, or we love our children, or we yearn for a relationship more than we love God, then our hearts are not set on things above.

If we pride ourselves in self-sufficiency and never need to ask for help, then we are not setting our minds on things above, because it robs people of the opportunity to serve us.

If our hearts are more inclined towards personal comfort and rest than fellowship with other believers, then our hearts are not set on things above.

[13 : 10] to have our hearts set on things above where Christ is seated is to be doing our everyday life in our jobs, in our relationships, in our trials, in our struggles, with our eyes fixed on Christ, sitting at the right hand of God.

The image comes from Psalm 110, a famous psalm where David says, The Lord says to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool under your feet.

The image is of Jesus sitting next to the Father and speaks of the promise of glory, a glory which we, as believers, will also enjoy.

And that's picked up in verse 4 of Colossians 3 again. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

People often say about someone that they are too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good. Well, in actual fact, what Paul is saying here is that to be of any earthly good, we should be more heavenly minded.

[14 : 23] For example, when we are tired or weary, instead of vegging out on Facebook or YouTube or in front of the telly, we could turn our minds to things above.

And God's word tells us in Matthew 11, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Or suppose we are anxious about the future or about our finances.

Well, we could worry about them or we could set our minds on things above and read Matthew chapter 6, which tells us of the uselessness of storing up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, but to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

Or suppose we are discouraged by taking a stand for Christ publicly or continually doing the right thing, we are still discouraged because we don't think it makes any difference.

Well, we could just give up doing the right thing. Or, as Matthew chapter 5 says in verse 11, Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

[15 : 44] Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Even when we are tempted to sin, having a heavenly outlook will help us.

For example, in Psalm 139, David says, Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Our help in times of trouble comes when we have a heavenly mindset.

It's like when training for a marathon. The average runner will run close to 500 miles over 16 weeks leading up to the big day. There will be early mornings, there will be long runs, there will be rainy runs, there will be hilly runs, there will be really hot and sticky runs, there will be blisters on your feet and even nastier things which I won't go into now.

But once you set your mind on running and finishing that run on that one day, that is what gets you up early in the morning for the runs and drives you through the pain of blisters, setting your mind on the goal, the glory that awaits for you on this finish line.

[17 : 11] set your hearts and minds on things above. Look up. Secondly, put off.

With the benefit of looking up, we are now equipped to put off. Verse 5.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

When it comes to our response to sin, the Bible is stark and clear. We are to put it to death. Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature.

What's our earthly nature? Well, things that feel good and natural and normal and things that we are told are normal and natural and good.

[18 : 15] That's our sinful nature. That's our earthly nature. Well, as we know, not all things that feel natural are good. Paul says that as Christians we no longer need to take the bait of sin.

of what feels natural or our sinful nature. We are freed from that compulsion to sin.

Believers can reject all those behaviours that alienate them from each other and from God. Because when we died in Christ we died to the power of sin over us and that power was replaced with the power of the Holy Spirit which enables us to reject sinful behaviour.

Verse 5 says to put to death therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature sexual immorality impurity lust evil desires and greed which is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming.

You used to walk in those ways in these ways in the life you once lived but now you must read yourself of all such things as these anger rage malice slander filthy language from your lips.

[19 : 38] When we look at a list like this we can be tempted to start counting up well one and a half out of five in the first list and two out of five in the second list well that's not too bad really is it?

That's nearly a pass. Well that's not the point though. Let's look at the first list. Verse five again sexual immorality impurity lust evil desires and greed it's no accident that these are listed in order of most visible to the least visible.

So Paul begins with public sexual immorality. which was rampant in the ancient pagan world.

He moves from behaviours to attitudes including greed which focuses on satisfying physical desires.

He concludes by saying that if we trace back from the behaviour to the motivation behind it we find idolatry at the core. By focusing inwardly on satisfying our physical passions well that amounts to placing ourselves at the centre instead of God.

[21 : 03] Therefore if we want to bring about change in the public behavioural level of our lives we have to ultimately kill that which led to it all in the first place which is idolatry.

as with weeds in the garden simply snapping off the shoots will not make permanent changes. The gardener must dig out the roots for any lasting results.

So I ask you this morning what's your idol? The second list starts with anger.

anger. The public demonstration of which is rage. And he goes on to the more subtle forms of anger such as slander. Well in each case what comes from a person's mouth dishonours or pollutes them.

As new creations the Colossians are to rid themselves or to put off their old repulsive habits including evil speech. Anger and rage destroy harmony in human relationships.

[22 : 22] Malice is a general term describing an evil force that wrecks fellowship. Slander in this passage means the insulting of human character.

Filthy language ought to be stopped before it even comes out of their mouths. In light of this what comes out of our mouths is important and so there is no place for lying.

If we are Christ's image bearers well then we must be truthful. so this morning if you are a Christian you probably at one time praised the prayer of repentance and asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins.

Well this is good. I give thanks that many of you have reached that point. But the Christian life is not a one off decision to repent of your sins and carry on life as normal.

Our daily lives are changed after we have encountered Jesus. We cannot live like we did before. As followers of Jesus we have received a new heart because like in Colossians 3 verse 3 it says you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

[23 : 56] Or back in chapter 2 verse 12 we have died with Christ or been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead.

Paul puts it another way in chapter 1 verse 21 when he says once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds two two two things are clear from these passages one if we were dead and now we are alive or we can't live like we used to we can't live like dead people if we are alive if we were separated or alienated from God because of how we were living we cannot continue to live like that now we are different people brothers and sisters and friends there are no half measures here if there is sin in your life if you have idols which are not

God if there are good things even good biblical things in your life that have become ultimate things then put them to death put off what belongs to your earthly nature someone close to me was admitted to a rehabilitation centre a while back they entered into the program because they felt they were overly dependent on alcohol once in there they were told that to beat it they must never drink alcohol again they must put it to death the problem was that they didn't believe they had a problem they just had a temporary or an over dependency on it a little night cap to help them unwind and to sleep by the time they left the centre they hadn't had a drink in a month and so they didn't feel like they needed to drink again which was great for a while when they were offered a drink at a party they could easily say no fast forward a year and for whatever reason they're drinking again the idol or the sin of pride or self regulation had stopped them initially calling themselves an alcoholic sin had blinded them to their weakness to the earthly nature or the flesh as we might know it

I have sat through addiction lectures counselling sessions support group meetings I have seen the devastation that addiction causes to families and to relationships the first three steps of the addiction 12 step programme are these but I have changed the substance of choice to the word sin as I don't believe there is a difference step one we admitted that we were powerless over sin that our lives had become unmanageable step two we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us step three we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him sin is not something that we get a handle on or learn how to manage sin is something we must die to we must put to death we if we are

Christians daily need to admit that we are powerless over sin that Jesus can restore us and I would add bring us into glory and that daily we need to turn our lives over to the care of God by acknowledging our weakness and our need of help we often open ourselves up for the spirit of God to work in us when we are weak he is strong and moves in and takes up residence in us it is when the spirit is at work that we are able to look up and set our minds on things above when the spirit is at work in us we are able to say no to sin and put off or put to death that which is our sinful earthly nature look up put off and put on in contrast to the list the two list of vices that we read in verses 5 to 10 here we have a list of five virtues in verse 12 read it with me therefore as

[29 : 38] God's chosen people holy and dearly loved clothe yourself with compassion kindness humility gentleness and patience bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone forgive as the Lord forgave you and over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity now if all we did was to take everything off in our lives and chastise ourselves all the time and criticise ourselves well then we would be left naked so to speak we've taken everything off and are left bare and naked but thankfully Paul doesn't leave it there I was planning on just speaking about dealing with sin this morning and the importance of taking off or putting to death sin but of course

I couldn't just leave it there because we'd all go home naked and that would be awkward you can laugh if you like thanks it would be awkward well thankfully Paul doesn't leave us naked and cold and feeling vulnerable he tells us to clothe ourselves to put on look at the passage again therefore as God's chosen people holy and dearly loved clothe yourselves with compassion kindness humility gentleness and patience do you see that opening line as God's chosen people as God's chosen people we are chosen we are holy and we are dearly loved they are special titles which were used of Israel as God's own possession in the

Old Testament and they are titles that are used for Jesus in the New Testament they are used to show how similar we as Christians are to Christ it is Jesus who is the chosen one and so it is an incredible privilege to be addressed in the same way as Christ what more motivation do we need to behave in a Christlike way these virtues or these graces which we are to be closed with are seen elsewhere as characteristics of God or Christ and they show us how we should behave in our dealings with others particularly other believers three of these kindness gentleness and patience are listed in Galatians chapter 5 as fruits of the spirit in fact all of them are characteristics that we show towards other people they're all things that we do towards other people

Paul is showing us how we should be relating to each other he has just been writing so he's been talking about in verse 11 here there is no gentile or jew circumcised or uncircumcised barbarian slave or free but Christ is all and is in all so Paul is showing us how we should be relating to each other he's just been writing about the social racial and ethnic differences that should not divide the people of God he's been saying that lying can affect the whole community of believers and here we are with these five graces which also tell us that we are to clothe ourselves with those things which are Christ-like and important for the unity of Christian community

Paul was thinking of the whole body of Christ and the importance of its unity bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you have with each other and then comes the sucker punch the ground and the motive for forgiving is just as Christ forgave you our sin put Christ on a cross where he died and when he was there he said father forgive them they don't know what they're doing if we have a disagreement with someone in the church we need to forgive them because Jesus forgave us but also because we need each other to hold us up when we fall and when we stumble one major step in overcoming addiction is meeting regularly with other addicts through anonymous meetings or through sponsoring programs the sponsoring program is like having an accountability partner someone you can ring in times of weakness or craving someone who knows what you're going through because they have been there too someone who has benefited from the encouragement of another both of these methods of ongoing accountability are vital for the continuing health of the addict

[35 : 29] I hope by now you've seen the correlation to deal with sin effectively we must put it to death there can be no half measures but we must also put on the clothing that has been offered to us surround ourselves with the fellowship of other believers as we navigate life after repentance turning away from sin we say it time and time again that God speaks primarily these days through his words his spirit and through his people the church of God is a vital method of communicating the good news of Jesus to the world and so we as the church of God are tasked with representing it well to do this we need to be quick to deal with sin to kill it to root it out to turn away from it and also to use what the

Lord has given us to put on that which will help us he has given us his word his spirit and his people for a purpose so my charge to you this morning is to look up fix your eyes on Jesus in glory put off kill whatever takes your focus away from Jesus in glory and put on use what we have been given use the people that we have been given to bring us to Jesus in glory will you pray with me heavenly father we confess that we are weak to the sinful nature we take the easy option more times than we should we confess that we have idols even good things which have become ultimate things and we put them before you we give thanks that you have demonstrated forgiveness on the cross that our sin has been dealt with please help us identify the sin in our life help us by your spirit to put it to death to say no to it help us to put on truth help us to use what you have given us your word your spirit and your church to bring us to Jesus in glory fix our eyes on

Jesus we pray in Jesus name amen we're going to close with one final song see key first