

Put Off Your Old Self

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[0 : 00] I'm wearing, it'll become obvious in a bit why I'm wearing, I put on two extra layers of clothing before I started to preach. So, you know, when I teach people how to speak, one of the things I tell them is that they have to have a nice snappy opening.

And this week on one level it's easy, we're going to talk about sex, amongst other things. So that gets everybody's attention almost instantly. And as we all know, the biblical teaching on sexuality is unbelievably popular in Canada and is completely and utterly uncontroversial.

So it's a very easy topic for me to address. And it's all part of a vice list, by the way. Those of you who might be watching online or one of our guests here this Sunday, we preach through books of the Bible.

And one of the really good things, if you are a spiritual seeker, we're just curious about tuning into our churches. We don't hide the fine print since we go through a book from the beginning to the end.

Everything which is in there, including stuff which is very awkward and difficult, we're going to look at. In fact, if you're curious, in a couple of weeks' time we're going to talk about the biblical advice to husbands and wives.

[1 : 18] Once again, another easily understood and highly popular topic in Canada. And we're also going to talk about slavery because this Bible text deals with slavery. So no controversial topics.

Just all vanilla and Teflon Sunday in and Sunday out. No, I'm joking. And it's a very serious issue. And I really don't mean to joke because, of course, for some of the things that we're going to be talking about today, it's deeply, deeply, deeply personal and strikes at the very heart of some of our identities.

So let's begin by looking at the text again. And I'm going to read through the text so you see it. What it is is that we're looking at what the Bible would call a sin list or a vice list is another way to understand it.

And there's 11 sins or vices which are mentioned in the text of Scripture. And that's what we're going to look at. And so it's Colossians chapter 3, verses 5 to 11.

And really, the vice list is chapter 3, verses 5 to 9. But verses 10 and 11, which we're going to read next week as well, a couple of weeks ago I think I shared how sometimes in the Bible and in literary devices in general, you have what's called a Janus text.

[2 : 34] It's a text that looks in two directions at the same time. And that's what verses 10 and 11 are. It's a bit of a bridge text, or it helps on one hand to look back at what's just been talked about, and it opens the door looking to the next bit.

So we'll read verses 10 and 11. And here's how it goes. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you. And just before I go anything further with that, this text isn't saying that the earth is bad, and it's not saying that physical stuff is bad.

Far from it. What it's doing, the verse which was just before this, is talking about the fact that when we see Jesus, and we're going to return to this in a couple of moments, when we see Jesus, we will be changed.

We will become like him, fit to inhabit the new heaven and the new earth, where there is no evil, no prejudice, no racism, no sin, no death. And so what this is talking about here isn't physical stuff, because we're going to have bodies in the new heaven and the new earth.

But it's, in a sense, all the stuff you leave behind when you go into the new heaven and the new earth. All the stuff that's left behind. And there's lots of stuff that's going to be left behind. Thanks be to God.

[3 : 46] And that's what it's referring to here. Okay, so put to death everything that's going to be left behind. If you think about the fact that from the Christian story, the Christian gospel is that when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, you change your story.

You enter into a true and better story. And that true and better story has a far better end. The end isn't death. The end in Jesus is to see Jesus face to face and to become like him, to dwell in a new heaven and a new earth.

So that's what the earth, we'll read verse 5 again. But put to death, put to death therefore what is earthly in you. Sexual immorality. And just to be clear here, before we go further, sexual immorality, it means, it's the pornea word group in the original language.

And basically, the Bible teaches that sexual knowing and sexual stimulation is reserved for a biological male married to a biological female in marriage.

And that that's what, anything apart from that is what pornea or sexual immorality is referring to. Just to be clear. So put to death therefore what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness.

[5 : 12] Which is idolatry. On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming. And just pause there for a second in verse 6. This is a really important verse in the vice list because what it's telling us is that these aren't just boundary markers to separate Christians from non-Christians.

So for instance, baptism is a boundary marker separating a Christian from a non-Christian. The fact that I'm wearing a collar is a bit of a boundary marker. But it's said that I've been ordained, set aside for the service of God in the church.

And so what the Bible is saying here is that this isn't just a, you know, in a sense, the Sabbath keeping on one level is a boundary marker. Coming to church is a boundary marker. So the Bible here is saying that these things which he's just mentioned, the five sins which he's just mentioned, and the six sins which are going to come aren't boundary markers, that there's something which is objectively wrong in God's sight.

I know for those Canadians who are present and those watching, I'm making the matter harder rather than easier, but it's just, it's far better to just understand what the text is actually saying. And so that's the significance of verse 6. And then verse 7, this is also very, very, very important in hearing the vice list. Let's look at what it says. It says, in these two, you once walked when you were living in them.

[6 : 43] So the reason this is very significant is that this is not an us versus them text. Quite a few years ago now, or 10 years or something like that, on my summer holidays, we went to a large evangelical church.

And by coincidence, the large evangelical church, the sermon that Sunday was on Christian marriage and divorce, Christian marriage and divorce, mainly about Christian marriage. And as the sermon went on, I became more and more and more astounded, but not in a good way.

Because, I don't know, there might have been like four or five, six hundred people in the room, and he talked as if not a single person in the room was ever divorced.

And as the sermon went on, I thought, how on earth could anybody in Canada talk to a room full of people, like 500 people, as if none of them had been touched by divorce or living together.

Like, it was just, it gobsmeaked me. You see, what it reflected was his understanding that, you know, on purpose, I'm putting the Bible down because that's what they do.

[7 : 50] We are the pure. We are the sinless. We live by all of God's words. We know you all do. But when you go through that door, there's bad, sinful people.

I'm using, this text knocks that completely out from under it. Paul isn't talking about the group of the pure in the midst of an impure world.

he's saying, people here, these types of things, that's us. It's what we lived out of and what we're still tempted to live out of.

That's why I'm talking about these particular things. So it's not us versus them. It's us. Read that again.

Verse 7. In these two you once walked when you were living in them. But now, you must put them all away. Verse 8. Now here's a new list. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

[8 : 53] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self, and that could also be translated as the old man or the old humanity, with its practices, and have put on the new self or the

new man or the new humanity.

Those are different ways you could validly translate this particular text, which is being renewed. So the new self, the new man, the new humanity, is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all in all.

And what Paul is doing here at the end is he's saying how the gospel has relativized all of these different distinctions that human beings think are very, very important.

And he's used the ones which have been very common back then, in other words, part of the Roman Empire, but not Jewish, that's Greek, Jewish, circumcised and uncircumcised, it has to do with religious background, barbarian, Scythian, and Scythians, actually, Scythian, United States and England aren't in the Bible, but Russia is.

[10:12] Scythian was the area we now call Russia. And it was where they considered to be the most barbaric of the barbaric barbarians. That's where they lived. In other words, the full extreme of barbarism, slave, free, but Christ is all in all.

So all of the distinctions that we make that are very, very important to Canadians are all completely and utterly relativized by the gospel because when you receive Jesus, you become in Christ and Christ is in you and it means you get a new identity.

It doesn't mean that you stop, in a sense, living in Scythia or, in fact, technically being a barbarian or Greek or Jewish, but it means it's relativized because you have a fundamental new identity based on a new destiny.

So that's the particular list. Now, some of you, it's, for some people when you're looking at the list, it seems as if it focuses on sex an awful lot.

I'm going to, here's the thing about this particular list which is really important for us to understand.

For the average Canadian, this first list, this first sin, sexual immorality is very, very hard.

[11:33] And it's not just hard for those who identify as LGBTQ+, or those who would consider themselves to be very friendly and inclusive of LGBTQ+, LGBTQ+.

But it's also just very, very hard for people who wouldn't necessarily say that they're, I mean, they're not hostile but not necessarily friendly to that, just living a heterosexual life.

It's a very, very, very hard text and very controversial in Canada today. One of the things for us to understand is that in a sense that this list isn't focused on sex.

It's really focused on God and how he designed human beings to be. And it means that if you were to go to different cultures, parts of this text might be very problematic. So for instance, if I went to a Muslim country, a Muslim majority country, and I happen to be able to preach to a bunch of Muslims, obviously there is some significant differences between the Christian sexual ethic and the Muslim sexual ethic.

Depending on the Muslim majority country, I might have to say that the Bible doesn't allow polygamy. And I might have to say something about how some Muslim countries use the Muslim practice of divorce, Islamic practice of divorce, to allow prostitution to exist without being considered prostitution.

[12:57] I might have to do that, but fundamentally, if I just explained what the biblical teaching is, like, they would view it as fundamentally not very controversial. But, if not in the vice list, when it comes to the virtue list, when it comes to some other things, they might find it very, very, very, very problematic.

In fact, it might be that I'd spend the majority of my sermon dealing with some other type of issue in it. You know, maybe it's around the biblical teaching of forgiveness which comes up, or maybe it's about the whole biblical teaching of anger which is in this text, which could be a very problematic thing for some Islamic cultures that would really go against the grain of how they understand the world to be.

So, in one level, and in fact, if I was to, if we were all to go back in a time machine and I was to preach this text in a Canadian congregation in 1950, I would maybe spend no time at all on sexual immorality because it's not even viewed as a problematic thing.

They would just expect that it's completely and utterly true. And once again, there'd be other things where the text goes against the grain. But, but for us, it is an issue.

And I'm going to return to it, but I want to look at least briefly at each of the particular sins which is on the list. Let's look and let's look at the verses five and following again.

[14:17] But to put to death, therefore, what is earthly and new sexual immorality, impurity. Now, just before I start to try to help us to understand what these are, a few years ago, I had the great privilege to be able to go to Angola and with SIM and I got to speak in a variety of locations and one of the places I got to speak was at a church designed to reach out to a semi-nomadic people group who had just within the last few years started to have contact with Christians.

And I got to preach a sermon to these semi-nomadic tribes people in Angola on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. And it was one of the really interesting experience because the colonial language was Portuguese.

I would say a few words, like I tried to discipline myself to speak seven or eight words and then there were two translators beside me and so I would da-da-da and then the Portuguese speaker would da-da-da and then the person who spoke the semi-nomadic tribal language would go da-da-da-da and there was a couple of times when I would go da-da-da-da Portuguese da-da-da-da and then there'd be this conversation amongst Portuguese speakers who also knew the native language as to what on earth they were going to say and one of the things which caught them is that I used the word the Holy Spirit and that tribal language had, I might be slightly wrong on this but you get the basic ballpark, I think they had 27 different words for spirit because in that tribal group like there's the spirit of the tree, there's the spirit of this location, there's the spirit of a different plant, there's, you know, there's, but they had no general word for it.

Like they literally they just didn't have one word like we did and I can't remember how they ended up solving it. They also didn't have a word for ice or snow actually which was another one of the funny things that caused this five minute breakup in the sermon.

Anyway, the reason I'm sharing this is that for those of you who know several languages you know that there's sometimes, there's just not a simple way to translate one word into another language. So here's what these different vice lists try to get you a bit of a sense as to what they're talking about.

[16:33] Impurity. This could mean anything that makes you religiously or ceremonially impure. It could be, of course, referring to sexual impurity. But it also could be referring to desperate housewives and the Kardashians to luxurious living.

It could be describing how many of us want to live like rock stars, just profligate, no concern with money, just way, way, way, way, way overspending.

And it also can refer to not having pure motives, having duplicitous motives. In other words, what some people do in terms of how they advance in business or how they advance in politics or how they advance in the public service is they act like they, you know, there's that old line, if you can fake sincerity, you've got it made, you know?

And so they can fake sincerity, they can fake that they care, but they really don't. They're just trying to manipulate you. Their motives are impure. That's what's covered under the word impurity.

And the next word is passion. And really, to understand the range of meaning there, it's depraved passion. And of course, within that, it could refer to something sexual, but as you know, if you think about it as an aspect of depravity and passion for it, it can also be, we would describe anything that wants to hurt, a passion to hurt, a passion to belittle, that would also be considered under this particular sin.

[18:04] Evil desire or also evil passion. In particular, this once again could refer, in the range of meaning for the word, it can refer to sexual practices, but its fundamental idea is desiring what is forbidden.

And here, all of a sudden, you realize it touches on something very, very profound for Canadian culture and for science. Because in fact, there's large groups within Canadian society that they'd like to operate on.

They'd like to take aborted fetuses and be able to do experiments on them. They'd like to try to develop things in biological warfare. They'd like to try to figure out if there's ways to splice animal genes into human genes to create new types of human beings.

In other words, there's this profound desire for forbidden knowledge. And that's what's being talked about here as well. The desire to figure out different ways to manipulate germs to create biological warfare, something that most cultures would view as, it's a type of forbidden knowledge, but there's a hunger and a thirst and a passion for it.

That is what is being described here as evil desire. Covetousness or greed, that sort of obvious, desiring what other people have, desiring to have too much, just being completely consumed with worldly possessions and idolatry, replacing, making something other than the triune God as God, that's what's covered under it.

[19 : 36] Anger, in verse 8, that here, and anger and wrath sound like they're similar and there's a big overlap between the two of them, but the difference is this. Anger is a settled part of the personality, a settled type of anger that's just there.

I mean, this is actually a very, very, very important sin right now if you just think of how hard it is to try to have a civil conversation about the U.S. election. In fact, if you think about it, just to think of how big a problem this is in Canada, try having a civil conversation about lockdowns and masks with a large percentage of the conversation.

And you might think that these are not angry people. They've been your neighbors for years. You know, you give them your key when you go on holiday so they can come in and water your plants or feed your cat and yet they seem like they're not, but all of a sudden you talk about something and you discover there is a settled anger which is very powerful there.

And it might not be just a general angry disposition. It might be an anger towards a particular person or a particular set of beliefs or, you know, in a sense, this and the next one is also where things like racism and prejudice start to be revealed.

Where in fact, they seem normal until you get into that right type of topic and you realize there's actually an anger issue in that person's life. And as we know, anger is a gateway sin.

[21 : 04] All of these are gateway sins, by the way, but it's a very powerful gateway sin towards hatred, towards violence. And this is specifically condemned racism.

It's all there. And wrath is the anger explosions, the explosions of anger. Once again, I was just watching a video about a two or three year old video with Jonathan Haidt, an atheist Jew who's written a couple of really important books trying to analyze the culture, the righteous mind, and I can't remember what the other one is right now, NYU professor.

And in that time, he's just very open. He can't say a whole, he censors himself all of the time because of Twitter mobs and social media and Facebook mobs. That's the explosion of anger, which is a profound problem in Canada, United States right now.

Profound, profound, profound problem. And the Bible calls it out as a sin. Malice is, of course, basically always having harmful motives towards other people.

slander, slander, of course, is telling lies about the other or yourself. Obscene talk is also to be understood as abusive talk.

[22 : 20] And it could just be everything from just being very far too loud, far too assertive when you talk. It can be obscene, it can just be abusive. The type of talk that we might not realize is really abusive talk if we're with our buddies in our silo or our echo chamber, but you realize how abusive it would seem if all of a sudden you had to say that in front of the other.

And you realize it would come across as very, very abusive, just far, far too aggressive as a type of talking. And then the last one on the list is lies.

So, for some, people in our culture, when you see that these are the types of things that are being talked about, it actually makes it even a little bit harder for some people to see sexual immorality on the list.

They say, George, what's so wrong about a man who loves a man? Isn't that just natural?

How could that be on a list like this? George, everything you've said have made it harder. Not easier. Like, what's... Isn't it just natural? Like, why...

[23 : 40] Why would the Bible put that with all those other things that you're just talking about? And that is a really good question.

So here's how we have to understand both the hard things in the list and the others. The list is part of a book that we've been looking at that begins with chapter 1, verse 1, and goes through to the end of chapter 4.

And one of the things which is very important at the very... to understand why this list would even be there at all and how it's connected to anything else is how the Bible describes what it is that Jesus does for us.

That what the Bible is talking about is that God, the Son of God, would set aside His glory and prerogative and divine splendor and His appearance as God and that He would empty Himself and

He would come and walk amongst us and He does this so that human beings can be reconciled to Him and that out of God's...

the Son... out of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, out of their profound and deep love for human beings that are being bent out of shape and can't fix themselves, they can't leave themselves to fix themselves, that out of their great love Jesus comes and suffers the trials and temptations that we do only without sin and His life of unbroken fellowship with God and resisting temptation and not being anger-driven, not giving in to these sins even though He's tempted by them, in a sense, His perfect record and then His death upon the cross in our place that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, then what happens is like we say, Jesus, I need you to be my Savior, I need you to be my Lord.

[25 : 34] What the Bible has just described prior to this is that it's as if when you take the hands of Jesus, it's as if you're almost drowned in Him.

You are completely immersed in Him and entering Him. You're immersed in His life that you could never live. You are immersed in His death on your behalf and because human beings are in a sense like a little bit of a sponge, to be immersed in Him is also to mean that He becomes immersed in you.

That it isn't so much, although it's a very important part of conversion, it isn't so much that Jesus came so that you could be forgiven, but that Jesus came so that you could have communion with the Triune God.

And the only way for that to happen was for Him to live the life He did and die the death He did and for you to be immersed in Him. And part of the being immersed in Him is being forgiven and is being given new life, but you are immersed in Him and He is immersed in you all for the purpose, all for the purpose of being able to have, begin to have now a new communion with the Triune God, the living God that will go on into all eternity.

And that's why He did what He did and that's what the Christian life is. And so the part, this is, Andrew, if you could put up the little chart of the six-fold aspect of how the gospel grows you, this is in a sense just one step or one aspect of this whole process by which, if this is true, if God, the Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer and Sovereign over all of the universe actually entered into His universe out of love, out of pure, unrequited, gift love entered into His world so that He could do what we could not do for ourselves which is redeem His fallen creatures.

[27 : 57] Like, behind this text, if you understand this, that from before anything existed there was love, the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father and the Holy Spirit, before anything existed there was love and everything that came into existence was created by love and we were made to be in communion and at home living and breathing in and inhabiting and participating and responding and adding and adding to that love and that is why we were made and if you understand that this means that no matter how lonely you are today or how much you might think that you have that there's no one who loves you, the fact of the matter is, is that for every human being there has never been a time that you have been unloved.

Even right now there has never been a time that you have been unloved and it was purely and utterly out of love that God, the Son of God would come and do this and so you receive Christ Jesus as Lord and then there's the question well how do we live?

How do we live? And the Bible here from chapter 2 verse 16 right through till the chapter 3 verse 17 and beyond that just describes how we live.

Twice now I've talked a little bit about how the Bible talks about Colossians talks about how you're dead in your sins how you're dead apart from Christ you're dead it's as if you're a cadaver you're a corpse you're a body in a funeral home and how does the Bible understand that when it doesn't seem like it's true and the analogy I used a couple of weeks ago is I had vases up front with cut roses in them and that's a way to understand what we are apart from Christ that we're a cut rose cut rose is dead isn't it on one level and it's decaying but it looks beautiful and that's what a human being is on one level every human being is like a cut rose and what the Bible does is the Bible says is that when you become united with Christ when you have union with Christ and Christ has union with you you now have in a sense his life that death doesn't have the same sting that death did before because Jesus has already taken all of the sting of death for you when he died upon the cross and that in effect you have actually the eternal life the life of the Trinity the life of eternity already within you when you put your faith and trust in Jesus and so that dying is actually in a sense an opening of the door to that time when we're fully alive that eternal life in a sense becomes full

and so the question is then will I grow me or will the Lord grow me and that's the first question up here will I grow me or will the Lord grow me and last week we looked at this this remarkable text about that just before this that when you put your faith and trust in Jesus at some point in time you're going to see Jesus face to face and when you see Jesus face to face you will become like him you will become like him and so the way

I tried to put it last week which is all under will I let the grow will I grow me or will the Lord grow me is in a sense spiritual disciplines and a lot of the and a lot of and I'm not saying anything against worldly practical advice it's very very important but basically a lot of spiritual discipline talk and a lot of talk about how to get better is really just a cut rose project and a cut rose project means is you learn how to to maybe have the rose last longer you learn how to make the light or whatever bring out the red of the rose a little bit better and there's all these different ways that we make the cut rose better but as long as we look at everything from our earthly perspective the stuff that's left behind all we're really involved in is a cut rose project but if you understand that what happens when you see Jesus face to face is that you will be like him then you understand that God doesn't have a cut rose project for you he wants to turn you into a giant sequoia and there's no way that all of the disciplines of a cut rose could ever do something that could turn a cut rose into a giant sequoia that's a miracle that only God can do and when the Bible calls us to holiness when it calls us to become more like Christ when it calls us to become more to you know in a sense filled with the Holy Spirit it's all part of God's project to prepare us to take those steps whereby we will one day be like a giant sequoia not like a cut rose and so that's why this fundamental first question will I grow me or will I let the Lord grow me is very very important because if I realize that I can't grow me all I'll do is try to make myself into a better cut rose and I don't even know how to begin to turn myself into a giant sequoia like that's a complete and utter mystery

[33 : 10] I have to put myself in a posture of obedience in those places where God has told me to be obedient so that he does that work within me it's a matter of a posture of obedience to let God do what only God can do because only God can turn a cut rose into a giant sequoia and nobody else can do it can't ever happen and so these are some of the postures it doesn't give all of them and then the very first one is set your mind on Christ Andrew if you could just maybe flip to the way I expressed it last week in light of his death upon the cross for you set your mind on Christ in all his risen sovereign trinitarian glory so in a sense what we understand with these six steps is that you wake up you had your coffee you're going to go to your day and you say Lord I know I have a choice as I go through my day will I follow a cut rose project or will I let you do what you want to do that I might become that you might turn me into a giant sequoia the beginnings of that right now and so Lord

I want to go through this day letting you grow me not me and then God says okay so one of the things I want you to do George is I want you to set your mind on Christ in light of his death upon the cross set your mind on Christ in all his risen sovereign trinitarian glory and as we talked about last week you can go look at last week's sermon you know there's all sorts of things we set our minds on and I say Lord help me today or Lord help me in this meeting Lord help me in this conversation Lord help me in this project help me in this week to set my mind on Christ in all his risen sovereign trinitarian glory help me not to set my mind on winning or on revenge or on lust or on anger or on hatred but to set my mind on Christ in all his risen sovereign trinitarian glory and then the next thing he says is okay George next you got to put off and it's literally analogies for clothing

I got to put off the anger and the rivalry that is really deep in my heart into this instance and Lord help me to put off my love for sexual immorality or my greed or my love of slander because I'm going to talk to somebody and we both have the same echo chamber and we're going to get talking about this group or whatever and it's easy for the slander to find and Lord I'm going to go into it I have to throw that away and for those of you who are very visually minded that might just be a very important exercise for you just to imagine Lord I want you to grow me so I can't grow myself into a giant sequoia and Lord I got to put off some of these things these are the first things I understand I got to put off and Lord help me to put them off in a sense

Andrew if you could just jump ahead to the point and then go back to this this is what the main thing about this putting off given your destiny in Christ put off sin sin is defined by the Bible not the world given your destiny in Christ put off sin sin as defined by the Bible not the world see one of the primary means of grace actually is reading the Bible and that's going to be talked about if you sort of flip back so you know who's going to grow me set my mind on Christ I put off but it's not as if God

just wants me to become more and more naked he wants me to be clothed next week I'll maybe bring something that I'll put on at this point in time and we'll look at that next week put on tender hearted mercy put on compassion put on love put on truth there's things you got to put on and then next let we're going to have a sermon about that the last two ones let

Christ rule in your heart get out of the way and let him rule and let him speak deeply into your heart and then the final one is do everything you do whether it's cleaning toilets whether it's negotiating on behalf of the federal government a major international treaty whether it's negotiating with a three-year-old to wear this piece of clothing not the other whether it's negotiating a business deal whether it's writing a symphony whether it's taking out the garbage do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God and these are some of the means by which God grows us so just in sort of in conclusion is this hard yes this is hard and some of you might say George I still don't quite know why it is the sexual thing is on that list

[38 : 20] George it doesn't sound very Canadian and it doesn't really make a lot just those days of marrying are maybe far behind and George were you know or you're in a marriage and it's sort of loveless and your husband doesn't get you or your wife doesn't get you like what like what's what's wrong with you know pornography and you know other things like that like George what's so wrong like why is the Bible like what's so wrong about that you know like it it just gives you some pleasure it gives you a fantasy time to maybe think that things are going to be better and George if you're you know same-sex attracted it seems as if this whole teaching and you're telling us to put all of that off it just it just

George seems to go against the grain and it seems just very very very hard what we have to say is you're right it is very very hard like it's very hard and from the outside it sounds completely and utterly impossible and I can't tell you how it's going to work out but understand what's going on here in this particular claim the fact of the matter is is that your deepest longings and yearnings are for in fact things like intimacy and things like love and at the very very heart and the very very center of this text is this story which is very different than the stories in the world are going to give you I have a friend who a couple of years ago he told me that when he gets to this point in time he's been to the Grand Canyon he loves the Grand

Canyon and when things have gotten to a particular point in time he's going to find somebody to take him to the Grand Canyon he's going to tell them to go away and come back in a couple of hours but once they've gone he's going to stand by the edge because there's no guard rails for lots of he's going to admire the view and then after he's admired the view for a few minutes he's going to step off the edge so he dies so he doesn't have to deal with aging and for a lot of people in our culture we think there's ways the aging process but the end of all of this all there is is death but I want to tell people that the Christian story tells us a far truer the true story that death does not have to be the end it does not have to be the final word about you that diminishment is not the final word about you that the true God that does exist that who has created all things is love it's the Father loving the Son and the Son loving the Holy the Son loving the

Father and the Holy Spirit it's love it's beauty it's goodness it's truth that is the that is what created all things and the evil and the death that's come into the world is not because of God but because of what we've done that's what's brought evil into the world and the final end of the story doesn't have to be any of these things is that when you understand what Jesus has done for you it's to understand that he is going to begin to not just make you into a giant sequoia but that only is true because you can enter into and grow into a deeper communion with love itself at your best moments when you sense that the heart of all things there must be something like the strong beating heart of love which doesn't seem to make any sense given the way the world is but sometimes you have that sense that that has to be the truest and deepest thing and the Bible is telling you that when you have that sense you are actually sensing something as true and the only one who makes that clear and can meet the longings and the yearnings the deepest longings and yearnings of your heart is the one who came and died for you on the cross and that when you put your faith and trust in him no matter how faltering it is no matter how hard you think it might end up being that the fact the matter is is that when you put your hands in him it doesn't mean that there's not going to be hard times there's going to be hard times but he dies for you to have communion with the true and living God with the source of all love and the end of all love that's what is the burning heart behind all of these things that when you see the death of Jesus on the cross you are seeing the death of death upon the cross and you are seeing the death of alienation upon the cross

and when you see the tomb empty and him having risen you are seeing that those longings that you have that there is a new and better hope a new and better end a true and authentic you all of these longings and yearnings find their completion and wholeness in Christ and it's from within that story that it starts to make sense and you can begin to have the courage to say

I'm going to put off those things that are not part of God's design for me I am going to put off the malice the slander the sexual sin the greed my lust for promotions all my cut rose projects I will put off in obedience and trust to the one who loved me this plan and the end of the story for me isn't death and diminishment and decay but well done my good and faithful servant I have loved you from before you were born and have longed and looked forward to this day when you were before me face to face in the new creation I have looked forward and longed for that welcome welcome and we will look at our friends and loved ones and laugh and cry with amazement and joy at how they are both the same and yet completely and utterly transfigured and transformed and they will look at us and laugh and cry with amazement at what we have become in Christ all by

[45 : 36] God's grace all by God's mercy nothing of our deserving and nothing of our accomplishment that is the end of the story invite you to stand let's just bow our heads in prayer oh yeah I forgot the general thanksgiving didn't I Andrew well you know we're just going to leave the general thanksgiving we're just going to pray Father we ask that if there's any who are present here who have never put their trust in Christ that at this point in time they turn to him they turn to Jesus and say Jesus be my savior and my lord take me and let me enter into your life

I thank you that you will say yes and come into my life with nothing held back or barred and for those of us who have put our faith and trust in Christ Father there are things in this text for some it's nothing to do with the sex stuff that's an easy thing for us we're bent or broken in that area of our lives but it's not a big thing but Father for others of us anger is a very powerful thing or believing lies is a very powerful thing false motives to get what we want is a very very powerful thing lack of forgiveness is a powerful thing and Father you know the struggles that we have and so we ask Father that the Holy Spirit would do a marvelous and wonderful work in each of our lives that as we have trusted Christ to be our Savior that we will trust him to be the one who will grow us this day that he will help us to set our minds on him in all his risen sovereign

Trinitarian glory and that you Father will help us to take off those things and put them away and put on those things of compassion and love and tenderness and mercy justice and of goodness that are all part of that great grand giant sequoia project that we are launched in when we put our faith and trust in Jesus we ask all these things in the name of Jesus and all God's people said Amen Amen Amen Amen