

# Killing Sin

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We're reading from Colossians chapter 3, verse 5 to verse 11. Hear now God's Word.

Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these, you too once walked when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which 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 and in all.

[ 1 : 0 5 ] Amen. This is God's Word. So we're in the middle of Colossians chapter 3 now, and if you were here last week, you heard me say that all of Colossians 3, you can think about it as one big section, and the theme of the whole section is become who you are.

Become who you are. So it's about change. It's about how to change and grow as a Christian. And at the beginning of the chapter last week we saw, Paul tells us what's the grounds for believing that you could ever change.

And he says it's because if you believe in Jesus Christ, you're united to Jesus so closely that when he died, it's as if you died. And when he rose from the dead, you rose from the dead.

And you had new life. And so there's a new life inside of you that's giving you a power that you never had before. That's what gives you the right to believe that change is possible. And next week we're talking about how, Paul talks about how part of what it means to grow is to put on the character of Christ.

So it's all these positive traits like love and generosity and humility. But this week is the opposite. This week is all about if you're in Christ, the way to change is by killing your sin.

[ 2 : 1 8 ] It's by killing sin. And you see that that's the language he used in verse 5. He says, put to death what's earthly within you. It's violent language.

This is warfare language. And Paul says if you want to grow, you've got to kill your sin. You've got to execute it. You've got to be vicious with it. And you've got to take it deadly seriously.

And so what we're going to look at this morning is three things. Number one, the power of sin. What Paul shows us about that. Number two, the power of God over sin. And then lastly, we're going to consider for just a moment the power to put sin to death.

But the first is the power of sin. And you see the power of sin in the fact that it has to be executed. If something needs to be put to death, there's an assumption there, which is that it's living.

And it's powerful. And the only reason you would ever put it to death is if it's causing a problem, if it's dangerous. And so Paul, when he talks about sin so often, he talks about it like it's this thing that has a life of its own.

[ 3 : 20 ] And when he does that, he's picking up on a theme that is not just from Paul. You see this all throughout the Bible. One of my favorite places where this pops up is at the beginning of Genesis.

Do you remember in Genesis chapter 4 where you've got these two brothers, Cain and Abel? And Cain is really angry with his brother. And do you remember how God comes to Cain before he kills Abel, just while he's angry?

And do you remember what he says to Cain, the way that he describes sin to him? He says, Cain, sin is crouching at the door and its desire is to have you.

So at the very beginning of the Bible, God comes down and he describes sin like a lion, like something that if you're not careful, it will eat you alive.

And he says it's crouching there. It's like it's hiding. And it wants you. It wants to consume you. And what's interesting is, you know, when you read the passage in Genesis that talks about Cain, it doesn't say, and there was Cain thinking about killing his brother.

[ 4 : 28 ] Now, what it just says is, he said he was angry, something that every single one of us feel. And so God's warning to Cain is this little thing that's growing inside of your heart can become really big if you let it.

If you don't rule over it, this thing can grow and it can consume you. And I wonder if at the moment where God is warning Cain about his anger, I wonder even then if Cain was not even considering killing his brother.

That would have seemed so far-fetched to him. But he does. And there's this human tendency in all of us, right, to, you know, we look at other people's sins and we think, how could they?

And we look at our own sins and they seem so small sometimes. And that's one thing Paul is doing here is he's saying, listen, for you to wrestle, to grow, you've got to come to grips with the danger of your own sin.

It's not like a leaky faucet in your house. It's like someone who's at your front door and they're armed. You know, you handle those two problems very differently, right? And there was a couple of years ago, Carly and I were living in Pearl.

[ 5 : 36 ] Well, that's irrelevant to the story, the fact that we were living in Pearl. But we were in Pearl. And I remember I was on a trip and she calls me in what I would call an extreme state of panic.

And what had happened was she and my Charlie, who at the time was probably two years old, they were eating lunch at the table in our dining room and a snake had slithered under the table.

And so she calls me panic. And, you know, when I answered the phone and she told me that, what I didn't say was Carly quit being so dramatic because she and I were operating under the same belief, which is that there's no acceptable level of snakes in your house.

It's any snake is an emergency, right? And so I immediately got on the phone and started calling anyone I could who could come help take the snake out immediately. And I think what Paul would say to us is you've got to learn to see your sin like that, as this thing that you can't just let it live there because it's always more dangerous than you think.

You remember when Jesus was talking to his disciples and they had all kinds of things they were worried about. And one of the things he says to them is he says, do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.

[ 6 : 55 ] Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. That's Jesus saying that. And he's not talking about snakes there, but he is talking about the devil and he is talking about sin.

And he's saying, you know, we fearing what is out in the world to us comes naturally. And Jesus says, you've got to be so much more alert, though, to the spiritual dangers that you face in this life.

And I think here's a here's a simple application question. When we think about just recognizing the power of sin is, you know, the first step for any of us to grow, to kill our sin like like Jesus, like Paul calls us to, is to to face our sin.

And so, you know, the first question you have to ask yourself is, am I willing to look my sins in the face and see their danger? You know, the the most danger you could be in when it comes to sin is not seeing it at all and getting comfortable with it and just seeing it as a natural part of who you are.

But but can you look can you stop and look your sins in the face and say, I'm going to believe Paul, I'm going to believe Jesus that these sins, they they're so they come so naturally to me.

[ 8 : 08 ] They're just habits, but they're so dangerous and they could they could cause my downfall. Can you can you look at your sins like that? And maybe that means admitting that maybe your sins have a power over you that that we avoid admitting sometimes. And, you know, you could call this kind of a come to Jesus meeting, but don't misunderstand that. That's that makes it sounds like when you come to Jesus for the first time. But this is this is a daily practice. Every single day you could do this and you could say, all right, who was I yesterday? What are the sins that crept up so unexpectedly that I have to address today that I need to repent of and kill? OK, and that's a small victory.

That is no small thing to stop and to take the time and just simply acknowledge the sins that I have in my life that have to be addressed. And and if you get to that point, then what do you do?

You have to take a heart inventory where you say, all right, well, what are those sins that I have to address? When you look at Colossians three here, what you notice, he gives two different lists of sins. It's two different sets of five. And one, the first list starts with sexual immorality, and then it goes on to other things like coveting and passions. And most people agree that that first list is all about sexual immorality and that the second list is all about anger and how we deal with other people. And so a lot of people speculate that the reason that he mentions these two lists is not because these are the worst sins, but because he knew that this is what these these this is what the Colossians were struggling with. And so he says, you've got to address these specific sins in your life. And each of us has to do that. We have to sit down and say, what are my tendencies? Where where are the sins in my life that has to be addressed? And when you do that, you're admitting the power of sin.

And that's the first step towards addressing it. OK, but the second thing you see in this passage is the power of God over sin. And you see that in verse six, where Paul says, on account of these, the wrath of God is coming. Wrath, God's wrath. Two things that that means here. Well, number one, God has wrath.

That's that's an uncomfortable idea for a lot of people. You know, when you when you say if I were to ask you, what do you love most about God? Nobody's going to say God's wrath. Right. We love God's love and we love his mercy. But Paul says God has wrath here. And it's really in the 21st century, in our Western culture, especially the wrath makes us uncomfortable. And a lot of it is because when we think about wrath, what do you think about? Maybe you think about the the employee who makes a mistake at work and his boss comes and just screams at him and tells him that he's a worthless person. You know, when we think about wrath among other people, it's always about people giving others not what they deserve, giving them worse than they deserve. Right. The person who can't control themselves. And even in this list, Paul says to Christians, you've got to give up your wrath because your wrath is sinful. There's this anger. It's this uncontrolled is hatred, hatred in an unhealthy way. And but at the same time, it says God has wrath and God's wrath is coming. And when the Bible talks about God's wrath, what it means is simply this. God giving to sin what sin deserves. Or you could think about it like this. God's wrath is the expression. It's the it's the working out of his justice in this world. It's simply it's simply God addressing the wrongs of this world and giving sin exactly what it deserves. I'll give you an example.

[ 11 : 56 ] In Exodus 22, when Moses is giving God's law to the people, one of the laws talks about God's wrath. And he says this in Exodus 22, he says to the people, do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless, the orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, this is God speaking. I will certainly hear their cry.

My anger or my wrath will be aroused and I will kill you with the sword and your wives will become widows and your children will become fatherless. Now, those are hard words, right? God is saying, I will bring retribution to you. But he's saying it will be for a reason because you God is saying in my country, in Israel, no one takes advantage of a widow and no one takes advantage of an orphan.

And if you do, what's going to happen? My justice will come down. My wrath will come down and address the situation. That's what God is saying. He's saying that there's a good news to God's wrath, which is knowing that God sees. I mean, don't you look out at the world and you see people acting?

You see injustice. What Christianity does to us is it gives us a right to say that's wrong. And one day God is going to make everything that's wrong, right? God's wrath is in the Bible.

It's the proof of his justice. It's the proof that he's not going to let anything, any stone be unturned when it comes to making everything right that's wrong with this world. But there's a there's a double edged sword to it, right? Because it's easy for us to look out into the world and say there is so much injustice that I want my God to address. But then if you say if you're willing to say that, if you want to say God address every injustice, then the Bible turns back and says, don't forget your own heart, because all of our hearts have this sinfulness, have this injustice inside of ourselves that has to be addressed. You know, the psalmist puts it like this in Psalm 130. He says, if Lord, if you kept a record of sins, who could stand? And that's the psalmist saying, you know, on the one hand, I love God's justice, but on the other hand, it terrifies me.

[ 14 : 21 ] Or I know I know that if I was to stand on my own merit, I would be terrified of God's justice. And this is where this is where we say God is just and we need mercy in the midst of his justice as good.

His his his justice is good. And we need mercy at the same time. You know, just a few moments ago, we sang in Christ alone to him that's printed in your bulletin. That's probably one of the most famous hymns of the past 25 years. And did you notice that it talks about God's wrath? It says there on the cross as Jesus died, God's wrath was satisfied. And what what the Bible's the reason we can hear about God's wrath without being crushed by it is believing that God did do justice to our sins.

But it's in the past tense. He did it. And Paul picks that up in Colossians 3 at the beginning. What we read last week, what does he say? He says, for you died. Paul says, what hope can you believe that you'll grow and that your life is hidden with Christ? Well, Colossians 3, 3, you died when Christ died, you died. And when that happened, all the wrath of God that belonged to the sins that you have, it all got satisfied in one moment at the cross. There was a big controversy a couple of years ago because some denominations wanted this. I mean, this is a famous, this is a well-known hymn, if you're not familiar with it. And some denominations wanted to put this in their hymnal, but they sent a letter to the authors of the hymn saying, can we change some of the wording?

And what they wanted to do is they wanted to take out the line that says, on the cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied. And they said, can we change it to, what about on the cross as Jesus died, the love of God was magnified, which is true, right? The love of God was magnified. We see at the cross how much God loves us. But the writer said, no, we wrote this because we think it does justice to what happened at the cross and that God's wrath was satisfied. And that's actually good news that actually shows God's holiness and his love for us, that he would take all his wrath and put it somewhere else. Just like we talked about with the kids this morning. So there's this paradox of the Christian life, right? We look at God's wrath in a passage like this. And Paul tells us sin is deadly serious. And as you grow as a Christian, what happens, what should be happening is you grow in this awareness of your own sin. You know, you, you conquer, maybe you put us into death, but then you kind of open the next basement level and you say, all right, we got to go deeper.

The Lord's got to work even more on me. And you grow in your awareness of sin. And at the very same time, the reason that doesn't crush you is because you grow in your awareness of grace, because you say, my sin is so much bigger, weightier than I thought it was. And that must mean that if I really am forgiven, God's grace is a lot bigger than I thought it was in the first place.

[17:28] So, but let me ask you this, two questions to think about here. Why does, well, one question, why does, if we don't have to worry about God's wrath as Christians, why talk about it? Why would he say the wrath of God comes against sins like this? And I think there's two reasons. One is God, when we look at God's wrath against sin, it shows us the gravity of our sins.

We look at our sins and we say, I need to begin to see my sins the same way that God sees them. And that's one way that we become transformed. You know, I was talking to a friend yesterday about a mutual friend that we had who was making drastic changes to his diet.

And what had happened was he read a book that convinced him that some of the things he was putting in his body were way worse than he had previously thought. And once he realized what he was putting into his body, once he saw it differently, it, like he was disgusted by the things that he had been eating. And sin is the same idea. If we can see it for what it is, it's so much easier to walk away from. That's the idea here. But there's another reason too, which is not the primary reason, but it's worth saying at least.

Paul would say to anybody, if you've got sin in your life and it has complete free reign and you leave it totally unchecked and you're totally apathetic to the reign of sin in your life, then maybe God's wrath, it should be a concern. Everything that Paul talks about in this passage is really just repentance, right? It's really just looking at my sin and saying, I don't want to do this anymore. I turn away from it. And if you haven't had that experience, you've got to say, am I really a Christian? Because what did Jesus say? He said, faith always comes with fruit. You'll know a tree by its fruit. And one of the fruits of being a Christian is true repentance, where you really walk away. You begin to put your sin to death. So you've got here the power of sin, and then you see God's power over sin. And then lastly, just for a moment, the power to put sin to death, the power to put sin to death. How can you do it? And will it surprise you if I tell you that I think the only way that you can do it is with God? That's how we put sin to death. But Paul's specific here.

The way that Paul wants you to believe that change is possible is he says, you've got a new relationship with sin in your life. You know, Paul says you've got the old self and the new self.

[ 20 : 03 ] The old self was a slave to sin, couldn't not sin if he tried. Paul says that's who you are, but now you're in Christ and you have a new relationship with sin where that you can, you can execute it, you can put it to death, you can put it off, like he says later in the passage.

Because something is happening inside of you. You see how he puts it in verse nine? He says, do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

So Paul says the reason that it's even possible to put off your sin is because something is happening to you. You are being renewed in the image of your creator. I heard a theologian once say that one of the most clear signs that you're being led by the Holy Spirit is that you begin to put your sin to death. You know, a lot of times we talk about being led by the Spirit and we talk about it in terms of, well, God led me to take that job or to do this, or he led me to do such and such. But one of the ways that you really know the Spirit's leading you is if he's leading you to kill your sin, if he's leading you to hate the things that you used to love, the things that God hates. And the way that he put it was, he says, the Spirit comes into your life. You know, we think about it like the sweet angel that lands in your heart. But the Spirit is like a, it has come to kill. It's come to find every sin inside your heart and to put it to death, to execute it. And it's not going to stop until it's done that. Romans 8.13 put it like this. It says, if you live according to the flesh, you'll die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. So Paul has this idea that when the Spirit comes into you, through the Spirit, you begin to kill sin. And that's the hope that you have in the gospel. That's how change comes.

Two ways, just two things to think about when it comes to actually killing sin. Because you look at this and you say, well, what do I do? What am I actually being called to do here? And I'll just, two things to think about. Number one, what are the triggers for your sins? We talked about the Lord's Prayer last Wednesday night at our house, in our group, and Wednesday night fellowship.

And we talked about what does it mean when we say, lead us not into temptation. And part of what we're saying is, we're saying to God, Lord, lead me not to those places where I'm most likely to be tempted. And so one way to fight sin is to say, where am I most tempted? Maybe I need to walk away from those places or those habits that I have. Another thing to think about is, if you've got a sin that you've always struggled with, have you ever told anyone that? There's a power to telling other people. Maybe not standing up here in front and telling every single person what you're struggling with, but there's a real power to telling someone that you trust the sins that you're struggling with, because they may see something that you don't. They may be able to trace kind of the heart of your sin to a place that you've never even thought of before. You know, Paul says here, he says, you know, put away, put to death sexual immorality. You see how he traces it out? He says, you know, below sexual immorality, you've got these passions in your heart that you can't control. And below that, you've got coveting. You've got desiring things that don't belong to you. And below that, you've got idolatry. You've got looking for satisfaction somewhere else in a way that only

[ 23 : 44 ] God can give you satisfaction. Tracing out your sins. Those are just two thoughts. But the last line here, putting to death your sin is a lifelong struggle. It is not something that you become a Christian and then you execute your sins and you walk away and everything's changed. It is, it's the call of our lives to put our sins to death as we find them. And you've got to remember this passage in the context of the whole book. What's the book about? It's about Jesus. Colossians, the book of Colossians is about how Jesus is greater than you think he is. He's more powerful than you think he is. He's more gracious to us than we think he is. And the only way that we'll ever be able to truly put our sins to death is if we can look at Christ and be transformed by seeing what he's done for us and seeing in him the power that we never have for ourselves, the power to kill our sins. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gospel. We thank you for the spirit that you give us to put our sins to death.

And we pray that you would help us to keep in step with the spirit today. In your son's name we pray. Amen.