

Christ Central Living Part 2: Putting Off Sin

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Date: 28 April 2024

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[0:00] You may be seated. Kiddos, you're in with us this morning, and I just want to let you know, children, in with us, this first opening story is a made-up pretend story.

Would you open up your Bibles to Colossians 3? I'm going to be preaching on 5 through 11, but I'm going to read 1 through 11. It's on page 1169.

And 1170 of your pew Bibles. Colossians 3, 1. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

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

[1:10] 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 the 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.

May God bless the reading, hearing of his word. This is pretend. Imagine a young man in desperate need of a new suit.

New to him. Broke and unwilling to ask for help, he gets an idea.

[2:19] That night, he sneaks into Green Ridge Cemetery, just south of here, and he digs up the corpse of a man who's been dead for eight years, who just happens to be a 42 regular, 36-inch waist, 30-inch inseam.

The living man removes the grave clothes off the dead man, puts the dead man back into the coffin, buries him, and then puts on the dead man's grave clothes.

Stains of death. Smell of death. The crusty texture of death. That grave suit certainly is disintegrating.

Well, the next day, that young man is walking along the harbor side in these grave clothes. And walking towards him is this bright-eyed older woman who sees this young man in these grave clothes, and so she approaches him and asks, young man, why would someone alive be wearing the grave clothes of someone dead?

She goes on to say, come with me. Let's dispose of those old grave clothes. They don't belong on you.

[3:56] I'll get you a new lively suit that you were born to wear. What are you, a 42 regular? Christian, why would someone made alive continue wearing the clothes of someone dead?

Christian, you've been made alive in Christ. So put off the old clothes of the grave.

And make new room for the new. Those made new, put off the sin of old.

Three points from this passage. Christian, you've been made new. Second point, put away the old.

Third point, make room for the new.

Why would someone made alive in Christ continue wearing the clothes of those dead, separated from Christ? It's not who you are anymore.

[5:03] Let's look at this first point, your new self. Two weeks ago, I preached on chapter three, one through four. And I made the case, we need to have our thinking rewired.

Your identity now is in Christ. Remember 220, you've died with Christ. Remember 3.1, you've been raised with Christ.

We are now united with Christ in his death and resurrection. We're not who we used to be. We have a new identity. And we have a new aim in Christ.

We set our minds on the things above where Christ is. He's our aim. He's our priority. And we're on a new time frame. We live in between Christ's first coming and his second coming.

We live in the midst of the already and not yet. Church, what time are we on? Christ time. And all of this informs a Christ central way of thinking and living.

[6:01] It's who we are now. Well, in verses five and 11, Paul continues to develop this new way of thinking about ourselves and about our relationship to sin.

In verses seven and eight, he develops this thinking about ourselves in terms of before and after.

Look at verse seven. In these, you too once walked when you were living in them.

The things that he's talking about, the them that you were living in, points back to verse five, a list of sexual sin.

I'll come back to that in a little bit. But he's saying, that was your old grave clothes. That was before. Did you see the word once? See the word when?

Those are time markers pointing back before you were converted to Christ. Before, Jesus graciously changed you. And then in verse eight, of course, is the but now.

[7:07] You once were that when you were living in them. You're walking in a manner worthy of yourself and sin, not Christ. Before, but now, we put those things all away.

Because we've been made new. So there's this development of how we think about ourselves in terms of the before and after. So it's just very helpful. There's the before mic when I was living for sin.

And there's the after mic where Christ is the controlling center of my life more and more. But there's also another kind of line of development. In verses nine and ten, it's along the lines of old and new. Verse nine, do not lie to one another. Why? Why? 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 not just before and after, it's old and new. We're talking about the nature of who you were before and after your conversion, the spiritual quality of who you were and who you are.

[8:22] So when Paul talks about, in verse nine, the old self, that's the way the apostle Paul is talking about who you were before you were converted to Christ. And just to spell that out a little bit, that's when you were separated from God because of your sin.

That's when you were spiritually dead. that's when you were under God's wrath justly because of the sin that you were committing against him.

You were walking in them. You were living in them because that qualitatively is who you were. You were spiritually dead in those grave clothes.

Well, those just came naturally to you. Another way to think about it is in terms of chapter one, verse 13. We read this. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the beloved son.

The before you, the old self you, was you when you were living in the domain of darkness. That's who you were.

[9:35] Christ was not the controlling, life-giving, treasure center of your life. You were.

Sin was. And what Paul says in verse nine is that that's been put off. It's no longer who you are. If you've put your faith in Jesus Christ, that old self is before before.

You were once clothed in the old self with its evil practices, but that's not who you are anymore.

That old self died with Christ. The new self, verse 10, is Paul's way of describing who you are now having been raised with Christ to newness of life.

Elsewhere, in 2 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul talks about it like this. You're a new creation. The old has gone. The new has come.

[10:45] You're a new creation in Christ. You've been united with Christ to his death and resurrection and you've been made new. Dead to sin, alive to God.

He has forgiven all of your sins, all of them. That's why God's wrath is no longer over your head. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We no longer walk according to the practices of the old self, but we walk now in a manner worthy of the Lord. He's our aim. He's our aim. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, old self before, and transferred us into the kingdom of the beloved son, the kingdom of the new selves, the community of the new, and we live for him now.

So, here we have your new self united to Christ.

There's a before, there is a old, old self, old man that's no longer died with Christ and now you're new, brother, sister, in Christ.

[12:02] You're new. Christ has made you new. By virtue of being, you being united to him, you're new. Christ has made you new. Does anybody remember that great show way back?

Extreme Makeover House Edition. Ty Pennington and his crew. Well, here's what would happen. There would be this family and they're living in this old, dilapidated house and they would be sent to like Disney World for a week and Ty and his crew would come in and they'd rebuild the house. They'd bring the family back in and they'd put them behind this bus and that bus, they would say, move that bus and that bus would move back and then that family would see a new updated house. Do you remember what they do?

Faint. No way. Joyous. The old is gone. The new has come. The new has come. Christian, you're an extreme makeover.

Christ edition. That's who you are. The old is gone. The new has come. So I got a question for you. I'm going to ask you a question.

[13:10] If you're a Christian in the room, I want you to answer it. I'm going to say, who are you? And you're going to tell me, I've been made new. Who are you?

I've been made new. Here we go. It's who you are now. It's your new self. Now we move on to the next point. Now that you've been made new, we've been made new, we must put away the sins of old because it's not who you are anymore.

Why would someone living be wearing the grave clothes of someone who is dead?

In our passage, in verses five and eight, there are two sets of grave clothes of the old man when you live in the domain of darkness that we cannot wear anymore because it's not who we are. We need to put them away. We need to put them to death. And the two wardrobes are sexual sin and sinful speech.

[14:22] Let's take one at a time. In verse five, Paul lists out this wardrobe of grave clothes of sexual sin. He lists five of them. Sexual immorality, where we get the word porneia.

Impurity, passion, evil desires, and covetousness. Now I know what you're thinking. Covetousness? Why is that? What's that doing in a sin list of sexual sin? In Exodus chapter 20, verse 17, it's the list, 20 is the listing of the 10 commandments.

Remember those? The big 10? The 10th is a command against coveting. And God says, you shall not covet.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Do you know what I'm saying? If covetousness is a kind of greed, he's talking about sexual greed.

Wanting someone sexually that you are not allowed to have. That's the covetousness he's talking about here, the apostle Paul. It actually sums up the whole list.

[15:38] It's a sexual greed that's forbidden by God. Now here's what you need to know about these sexual sins.

They're all distortions of God's good gift and design of sexuality. We can't make the categorical mistake of thinking that sex is bad, sex is wrong.

It's God's good gift to us. So just to be very clear, the gold standard in which God gives us for us to enjoy our sexuality is in marriage.

And so in Genesis chapter 2 verses 24 and 25, God gives Eve to Adam and they were both naked and not ashamed. They became one flesh and what that's a picture of is the only place that God has given for our good that we can enjoy this good gift.

You know what that means? Anything outside, any sexual experience pursuit outside of these biblical gold standard of one chromosomal man and one chromosomal woman exclusively committed to each other before life, before God, anything out of that is a distortion of God's good gift.

[17:00] It's sin. It's wrong. Based upon what God says. It's even idolatrous. Do you know why it's idolatrous?

Here's what happens. People reject God and yet they're still worshipers. And so you know what they'll worship in place of God?

Something that makes them happy. Sexual pleasure falls into that. And so what happens is, this is Romans 1, people reject God and they will replace him with distorted sexual practices.

It's idolatrous and therefore provokes God's wrath. So let me just be crystal clear.

Marital infidelity when one spouse of a marriage is pursuing sexual relationships outside of that marriage. That's sin. That's wrong. That's grave clothes.

[18:03] That's old man living. That's old man living. That's old man living. Unmarried sexual enjoyment. Even when it's committed partners but you're not married or it's friends with benefits.

These things are outside of God's good design. They're wrong. Pornography in all of its forms, it's wrong.

It's outside of God's good design. Self-sex, homosexuality sex, it's all outside of God's good design. Now the world will say, the earth will say, these earthly desires, those who practice them will say something like this.

Well, well, they're in vogue. They're fashionable. It's okay. But God's word is crystal clear. This is sin.

This is wrong. It's not his design. It's not to experience his goodness along his terms. So what must we do? What happens if you're in the room and you're having an extramarital affair right now?

[19:13] What happens if you're in the room and you're looking at pornography? What happens if you're in the room and you're having a relationship, you're not married but with another person and it's sexual in nature, what do you do? The first three words of verse five.

Put it to death. And what that means is this. At the basic sense, it's considering these sexual practices that are not God's design as having been put to death with Christ at the cross.

That's old self. It's not who you are anymore. It's not me. It's not me. You know those medical dramas where a critically injured patient gets rolled into an ER?

The doctor rolls up, assesses, starts doing CPR, takes out those pad things, doesn't work. CPR more.

And despite all this, the doctor has done in order to resuscitate this person, the person dies. Do you know what the doctor does at that point?

[20:30] You've seen it. They say something like, I'm calling it. Time of death, 6.43 a.m. with a little look.

Brothers and sisters, here's how we put things to death. You've got sexual sin in your life. You've got to call it. You're dead.

When you were converted, you were united to Christ's death and resurrection. And Christ's death, scholars say, took place on April 3rd, 33 A.D.

at 3 p.m. You call it. That died. April 3rd, 33 A.D.

3 p.m. It's not me anymore. It died with Christ on the cross. We don't wear these grave clothes of sexual sin anymore because it's not who we are anymore.

[21:42] It's idolatrous. And it's not loving your neighbor. If I asked for a show of hands, every hand would go up.

Who has experienced, don't raise your hands. I'll raise mine for us all. Who in this room has experienced the disintegration of relationships, the destruction of relationships as a result of sexual

sin?

everybody's hand goes up. Whether it's something you've done or something someone else has done that has affected you, we've all experienced the fallout.

it's not loving your neighbor. That sin died with your old self on the cross with Jesus Christ.

it's not who you are. It might be common to man. It might be fashionable in this world at this time. It's idolatrous in God's sight.

[22:53] And you stand on that. The second set of clothes, grave clothes, is raised in verse 8.

We're to put away all anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk. Do you know what they all have in common? Where they're coming from. From your mouth.

anger from your mouth. Wrath from your mouth. Malice from your mouth. Slander, which we get the word blasphemy from.

It's attributing, it's saying something is true of someone when it's not. And obscene talk, filthy talk. From your mouth. Before. This is like your sexuality. Before you were converted and you were the controlling center of your life, then your controlling center governed your sexuality.

[24:00] And it's the same with your speech. Before you were converted to Christ, before he made you new, because you were the controlling center, your sin was it governed your speech. You spoke out of it.

In Luke 6, Jesus is teaching and helping his disciples kind of see false teachers. And what he says is helpful for us all, not just for false teachers, but to see stuff in ourselves.

And he talks about how a tree is known by its fruit, that the evil treasure that someone stores up, it bears evil fruit, evil speech. The good treasure someone stores up in their heart, well, it bears the fruit of, good fruit.

And then Jesus says, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Do you know why we speak sinfully? In anger and in wrath and in malice, slander people obscenely?

It's because sin is still in our hearts. We've been made new, yet there's this still sinful nature that's got to be put to death and put down. And sometimes we go back to the old way of our speaking in which we are speaking out of self-protection.

[25:21] We are speaking to attack someone. We are speaking, well, you know what? Here's another tactic. You don't speak, you give the silent treatment, but it's actually a verbal attack of a sort.

These are old ways of speaking. And these sins are common to man. Now, if you are regularly wearing these grave clothes, or better yet, you are speaking grave talk, I want to help you become convinced of the sinfulness of those things.

Read James chapter 3 verses 7 through 12. Take a look at Ephesians chapter 4 verses 29, 30. In fact, let's go there right now.

Ephesians chapter 4, 29 through 30, we taught our kids verse 29. They were grown up, we would drop that dime like twice a week, three times a week.

In verse 29 of Ephesians 4 says this, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

[26:31] That's how we speak now with Christ, our treasured center, functioning. We're not to speak grave talk. It tears people down.

It's disintegrating of relationship. But it's verse 30 that I want you to see in the connection that's being made. Verse 30, seemingly out of nowhere, he says, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by which you've been sealed for the day of redemption.

Your speech, your trash talk, it grieves the Holy Spirit. Do you know why? Do you know what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do in our church?

The Holy Spirit is seeking for us to speak the truth in love to one another, to build up our church, to unite our church. And when we speak grave talk, trash talk, it goes against the very work that the Holy Spirit is seeking to do in our midst.

it grieves the Holy Spirit. So what do we do? We put this kind of talk away, Paul says, in verse 8.

[27:43] Put it away. It's another way of talking about putting it to death. April 3rd, 80.33, 3 p.m., dead. That stuff doesn't come out of this mouth anymore because it's dead.

this is a mouth made new. This is a new self. I'm not going there. We put this trash talk in the trash can because it's not who we are anymore.

It grieves God and it's unloving to others. For every couple I get to marry, I walk them through a premarital counseling sequence and one of the articles I have them read is by Paul David Tripp. It's called Speaking Redemptively. It's a thick, dense article, but it is so good. Kelly has put 20 of those articles at the connect desk in that vestibule to my right.

Pick one up. It'll help you think about your speech more. Why would someone living be wearing the grave clothes of someone who's died?

[29:02] we put these things to death and we put them away is another way of talking about repenting of your sin. Turning from your sin.

Turning to Christ decisively. And when we do, we make space for something new. We put off the old and now point three, we make room for the new.

What we have in verse 11, let me read it. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all in all.

Do you know what we have here? We have a radical new way of relating with one another. Let me help you see it. There are four pairings of old man relating where you would relate to other people according to a worldly way, an earthly way.

Here are the pairs. Here there is not Greek and Jew. It's measuring somebody up based upon their culture, their background, their religious kind of practices.

[30:25] He goes on to say, here, there is not Greek or Jew, circumcised and uncircumcision. It's, again, a difference between cultures and physical distinctions.

Don't measure people up like that. That's an old way of doing things. The next one is barbarian, Scythian. You're like, whoa, barbarian, Scythian.

These are two types of Gentiles. And barbarians were Gentiles who didn't speak Greek. And the Scythians, well, they were like, the bottom of the barrel when it comes to Gentiles.

Has anybody heard the expression of white trash? Scythians were the white trash of Gentiles in the first century. That's how they were looked on.

So you have this, within Gentiles, you have this measuring up category. Oh, you're white trash. I'm a barbarian. And then, of course, there is slave and free who's got the power.

[31:42] These are old ways of relating, of measuring up. And when Paul says, here, he's saying, among you, church.

Here, there is none of that. Among you, none of that. None of that old, Christ-less way of relating to one another.

Every one of those pairings had hostility within it. today, we measure people up in a variety of ways by physical beauty, by physical health, by the appearance of physical wealth, of having it all together.

We measure people up politically. We measure people up educationally. We measure people up racially. We measure people up according to their gender, according to their moral adherence.

We do this. We default into a measuring up of one another. And when it comes into the church, it's an old way.

[33:00] These are grave clothes, brothers and sisters. believers. In fact, Paul introduces a whole new category for our church in how to relate with one another.

It's those last words. But Christ is all and in all. You could say it like this. Here, Christ is all and in all. Christ is our everything. Christ defines us. Christ unites us. We don't do the old stuff anymore. We live here now. That's how we relate with one another.

We put out those old clothes. Christ is all. He is our everything. He is our life.

He made us new. Because we've been united to him in his death and resurrection, we've been made new. So if I were to point to different Christians in the room, I'd be like, he's new.

[34:03] He's in Christ. She's in Christ. Born again. Regenerated. Yep, yep, yep. He's changed us. And so what that means is he defines us.

Our union with Christ is more important than what defines us politically. Our union with Christ is more important than what defines us, how we come down on social issues or race or gender.

What elevates us, what defines us are none of these old ways but Christ. In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul talks about those in Christ as a whole new people group.

Neither Jew, neither Gentile, a whole new people group. The blood bod of God. In chapter 1, verse 18, the apostle Paul is talking about how awesome Jesus is.

1.17, and he is before all things and in him all things hold together. Verse 18, and he is the head of the body, the church, he's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent.

[35:28] In our relationships he's preeminent. He defines us. And then there's Christ in all. He's in every one of us.

He defines us. He's in each of us. And therefore, he unites us. Do you know, I've used this illustration before, so bear with me.

Pretend with me there are two baby grand pianos on the stage. They're both in tune. If you hit center C in one, you will hear center C resonate in the other.

Our center C is Christ central. And so when we hit Christ central as the preeminent, uniting, defining person of our lives, it resonates with us all.

Christ is all. He defines us. Christ is all. He unites us. The thing is, sexual sin, sinful speech, this old way of measuring one another up, they detract from our unity as a church.

[36:40] That's why we've got to put them away. That's why we've got to put them to death. At the beginning of the sermon, do you remember what the old lady asked the young man wearing grave clothes?

Why would someone alive be wearing the clothes of someone dead? Christian, why would someone made new in Christ continue to wear the old grave clothes of the old man?

You've been made new. We put those old grave clothes to death. We put them away. They're not who you are. They grieve God.

They're unloving. And when we do, we make room for the new. New ways of relating and those made new in Christ they come and they experience a new way of relating.

That's who we are. This is Christ-centered living. And next week we're going to see how, what we must put on in order to live out being Christ's community with him at the center.

[38:06] Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you so much for who you are, for what you've done, what you're doing, what you will do. We're so grateful that you have taken center stage in our lives individually and as a church.

God, would you grow us in both our personal holiness and in our corporate holiness that you would become more and more the controlling center, the controlling treasure of our lives together, defining us, uniting us.

God, we pray that you would deliver us from grave clothes so that we can walk in newness of life together. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.