

Rooting Out Sin

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Date: 28 October 2018

Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Colossians. Colossians chapter 3, page 984, if you're looking in a pew Bible.

Chapter 3, we're looking at verses 5 to 11 today. Chapter 3, Paul's giving instructions to the church about what it means to live in union with Christ.

Last week, we looked at what it means that we have died and risen with Christ. Today, we're looking at things to put away, and next week, we'll be looking at characteristics to put on in this very practical section of the letter.

So, let's read Colossians 3, starting at verse 5. 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.

[1 : 15] 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.

Earlier this summer, I was walking around my backyard, and I noticed some weeds and vines that had been growing up along the fence. And I thought to myself, some of those look a bit like poison ivy.

You know, I got that as a kid. It wasn't very nice. I should probably deal with that sometime. But I was working on other projects around the house at the time. I wasn't quite sure what was poison ivy and what wasn't.

I wasn't sure how to deal with it without getting it, so I let it go. And it gradually slipped to the back of my mind. Then in early September, I was out in the yard again.

[2 : 29] And I noticed that these weeds and vines had grown up throughout the summer with the rain and the heat. And rather absentmindedly, I started pulling up a few of them, gathering them in my arms, and I dumped them in a corner of the yard and thought no more of it.

Until two or three days later, when I began to suffer the consequences of my carelessness. First little blisters appeared on my wrists, and they spread up my arms. Within a few days, they had spread all over and were appearing in new places every day.

It was a systemic poison ivy infection. I was itchy everywhere all the time, especially when I was trying to sleep. I was woken up in the middle of every night, and I would pace the kitchen floor trying to distract myself.

I tried every remedy I could find on the internet. Calamine lotion, oatmeal baths, even diaper rash cream, and apple cider vinegar. I don't recommend the latter. Finally, I had to go to the doctor and get prescription medication.

Now, since then, my attitude toward poison ivy has changed in three ways. First, I learned to identify it precisely for what it is.

[3 : 35] I carefully examined photos and descriptions of it on the internet. I'm a bit of a hawk about it now. I can recognize it from a distance. I can distinguish it from more harmless vines.

I've noticed, which I didn't notice before, how pervasive it is in our neighborhood. Second, I did some research about how to get rid of it. I asked some of you for advice. Some of the advice I got was not what I initially wanted to hear.

I wanted to deal with it without any chemicals, right? That's always the ideal. But the consistent advice that I received was, in this situation, the weed killer really helps. So I took that advice.

And third, I pulled it out by the roots. One day, I put on an old set of clothes, two pairs of gloves, some sneakers that I was ready to get rid of that had been hanging around for a couple of years, hadn't worn them.

I went through the yard, pulled up every bit of poison ivy that I could find. I even went into the neighbor's yard because that's where some of it was coming from. I picked up the pile of weeds that I had carelessly dumped in the corner so that no young children would happen to run into it.

[4 : 39] Thankfully, they didn't. I put every branch and leaf in the trash bag, and then I threw away the gloves, clothes, and sneakers that I was wearing. For now, at least, our yard is free of poison ivy.

The passage we're looking at this morning says that there are some things in our lives that are like poison ivy in the backyard. They need to be clearly identified, and they need to be ruthlessly exterminated.

Paul says in verse 5, put these things to death. He says in verse 8, put them all away.

Don't just ignore them. They don't go away by themselves. Declare all out war on them. Take no prisoners. Make no compromises. Get rid of them.

Pull them up by the roots. Throw them in the garbage. Not the compost. Don't let them come back and gain a foothold ever again. Today, I want to look at three questions.

[5 : 40] I want to look at what do we need to get rid of? Why do we need to get rid of it? And how do we carry out this process? So first, what do we need to get rid of?

And the answer is all sorts of spiritual garbage. Paul gives us two lists in verse 5 and verse 8 of nasty weeds that don't belong in our spiritual gardens.

Verse 5, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Verse 8, another list of five, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Now, in verse 12, Paul will give us a contrasting list of five Christian virtues to cultivate. And so next week, we're going to look at not just what we need to get rid of in our lives, but what we need to cultivate.

But in addition to the list in verse 5 and verse 8, Paul gives us two additional warnings in this passage. One in verse 9, where he says, do not lie to each other. And one in verse 11, where he's warning against creating or maintaining divisions in the body of Christ that is disregarding or dishonoring or excluding others who are of a different race or class or background.

[7 : 06] Do you notice how wide is the range of sins that Paul calls out here? Sins of thought, sins of word, sins of deed. This list covers most of the Ten Commandments, right?

Number one and number two, idolatry. Number three, dishonoring the Lord's name. That word slander could also be translated blasphemy. Number six, murder, right?

Jesus says anger and wrath and malice in your heart is murder in your heart. Adultery, number seven, and other sexual sins. Bearing false witness, number nine, with lying. And finally, coveting, number ten.

And you know, this isn't particular to the letter to the Colossians. These are not... Paul's not targeting specific problems in the Colossian church. This is standard early Christian teaching. You can read almost any of Paul's letters or other New Testament letters, and there's these lists, Galatians 5, 1 Corinthians 5, Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 1, and elsewhere, that cover all these bases and a couple more.

Or Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, right? Jesus covers anger, lust, unwarranted divorce, dishonesty, and unforgiveness all in one chapter.

[8 : 24] The point is, like a mutating virus, sin takes on many different forms, but they're all dangerous, and they're all ultimately deadly. Now, this is important to note because many people today criticize Bible-believing Christians for having a very narrow range of moral concerns, right?

Why are all those Christians so fixated on regulating other people's sex lives? Is that all that Christians really care about? Now, on one level, that critique is not totally fair.

Even the most politically conservative Christians are not proposing to criminalize sexual behaviors that they don't agree with. But at another level, I think the question is pointing to a genuine danger if we selectively apply these lists.

And I think whatever our political inclinations, we need to beware of this danger. N.T. Wright put it this way, many Christians tend to concentrate on either the list in verse 5 or the list in verse 8.

He says, He goes on to say, You might say that Paul is an equal opportunity sin attacker.

[10:05] All right? You see, if we single out one of these sins, whether it's sexual immorality or racism, and if we constantly speak out against it as if it's the only sin that really matters, and in the process we ignore or deny or minimize or excuse many of the others in this list, now, don't we almost always choose a sin to pick on that we're not particularly attracted to and that we're not currently involved in?

And doesn't that reveal some pride and self-righteousness rather than simply a pure gospel conviction? You see, we don't want to clear out the poison ivy, but ignore the poison oak and poison sumac.

They look a little different on the outside, but it's the same oil that causes the same terrible reaction in human beings. Now, another form of, we might call it hypocrisy or selective application that we can fall into is to speak more loudly against the sins of the non-Christian world around us than the sins within the Christian church and within our own hearts.

That's a bit like me going on and on about the poison ivy in my neighbor's backyard, of which there is plenty, I assure you, but not dealing with the invasive vines and prickly thorn bushes that might be spreading through my backyard.

Paul always saves his strongest words about sin for those who profess to follow Christ. In other words, in the fight against sin, we always need to start by cleaning our own house first, and only then will we be able to make a positive difference in our neighborhood.

[11:51] You see, Paul's message to non-Christians is never this, start behaving like Christians should. Paul never says that.

Now, yes, non-Christians can benefit from anger management classes. It's good we have those around. Non-Christians can benefit from not sleeping around. Even the New York Times health section last weekend rather reluctantly concluded that having fewer previous sexual partners, and especially having no previous sexual partners, does tend to make for happier marriages. It's good for society if truth-telling is the norm, and it's right to honor people of all ethnicities. Now, many non-Christians would share many of these values and sometimes embody them far better than Christians do.

But if you're not a Christian, the message of Christianity is not, start behaving like a Christian should, and then maybe we'll accept you. It's not, obey God, and then God will accept you.

The message of Christianity is that every single one of us, without exception, is more sinful and flawed than we admit or even can imagine.

[13:08] But in Jesus Christ, God has done everything necessary for us to be completely forgiven and forever loved. So turn to Christ. Trust in Him. You're accepted in Christ.

Therefore, obey. In other words, the verses we're looking at today flow out of the verses we looked at last week, verses 1 to 4. Did you notice, therefore, in verse 5, put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you?

We can only do that because of what verse 3 has already said. You have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Jesus died and rose from the dead, and we have died and risen, spiritually speaking, with Him. We are united with Him, and so we have a new identity and a new life in Him.

So we shouldn't focus only on some sins or only on the world's sins, but, you know, for many of us, the danger is not so much that we will selectively call people out on certain sins and not others or that we will only rant and rave about the ungodly world that we live in.

[14:23] For some of us, we are so concerned not to appear hypocritical or to have anyone accuse us of being hypocritical that we never lovingly and clearly call somebody out who is a brother or sister in Christ who is caught in a sin or being led astray by the deceitfulness of sin.

Instead, we say things like, I know they won't respond well, so I won't say anything, as if you can always predict the future. And even if you can, so what?

When does God call us to simply guess what's going to happen and only act on that basis? Or we say, we're all sinners, so who am I to judge? Even the Pope said that, didn't he?

Well, the Pope's comment was taken out of context, but that's neither here nor there. The point is we make excuses. Many of us are tempted to be cowardly people pleasers. And that is neither loving nor godly nor in accord with Paul's very pointed and plain words in this passage.

You see, Paul's concern here is that the true followers of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus would live up to the name of the one we represent. And that we would get rid of all sorts of spiritual junk

that does not belong in or among us.

[15:50] So what do we need to get rid of? All sorts of spiritual junk. All the things in this list. Now that brings us to the second question, why? Why do we need to get rid of all these things?

Paul gives four reasons. First, in verse 6, Paul says, get rid of sin because the wrath of God is coming on account of these things.

Now what is God's wrath? Sam Storms defined it this way. God's righteous antagonism toward all that is unholy. God hates sin.

He is absolutely, unflinchingly opposed to it because it wrecks his good creation and it denies his holy character. All the sins in these lists cause all kinds of chaos and fragmentation in our souls, in the church, and in the world.

When we practice these things, we are being untrue to ourselves and even more importantly, we are being untrue to God. And God will not simply let all of this go on forever.

[17:00] One day God will judge the world in righteousness. He will put an end to sin. He will condemn it to hell forever. And the only reason we have any hope of surviving that day is because Jesus has united himself to us and died in our place so that God could destroy our sin without destroying us.

That's the hope that we have, that we've clung on to Jesus. But still, even though God is committed to rescuing us and bringing us through that, God still hates the sin that dwells in us and is committed to getting rid of it.

And the question for us is, do we also hate our sin like God does? Are we indignant that it still has as much of a hold on us as it does?

In other words, the simple way to ask this question is, do you really want to change? Sometimes the reason why we don't make progress in getting rid of sin in our lives is because we don't really want to change.

We've made our peace with sin. We've decided that it's acceptable. It's understandable. It's not really that serious. It's too hard for me to live without it.

[18:33] So I'll try to manage it rather than get rid of it. But Paul says, no. Sin is not something to be pruned.

Sin is something that needs to be gotten rid of. Be killing sin or it will be killing you. John Owen said a long time ago, sin is rot that must be gutted.

It will slowly eat away at your very humanity until it finally hollows you out. Isn't that what happens when sin takes a deeper and deeper hold of a person?

It dehumanizes us. Any of these things, when they get deeper and deeper into us, they hollow us out.

God hates sin with a vengeance and so should we. Second reason, verse 7, get rid of sin because that's how you used to live, not who you really are.

[19:43] In these, you too once walked when you were living in them. You too once walked. That is, you actively engaged in these very sins in specific times and places.

And you were living in them. It's a more ongoing verb. That is, you were living in a context where such things were simply normal. Now, Paul's writing to a church of relatively new Christian believers in Colossae.

The church had existed for probably less than five years when he wrote this letter. And most, if not all, of the Christians in Colossae had come from a Gentile or pagan background where all of these things in one form or another were sort of par for the course.

Paul was reminding them those things characterized your former life before you knew Christ. In other words, these sins are not the real you.

They're only vestiges left over from your past life. Now, isn't that a powerful weapon in the fight against shame? Isn't the sense of shame the sense that I'm dirty and contaminated and worthless because of these things that I've engaged in in the past?

[21:07] They stick to me and I can never get them off me. In fact, they become part of who I am and we become afraid to let go of sin because we're afraid that we'll lose ourselves.

And Paul says, no. By getting rid of sin and clinging on to Christ, you're finding your true self. You're not losing your true self. And all the sin that clings to you is not who you really are at the deepest level.

It's not who God defines you to be. It's not who you are becoming in Christ. All that contamination and pollution and filth can be washed away.

It does not define you. So get rid of sin because God hates sin.

So should we. Get rid of sin because it's what we used to do. It's not who we really are. Third reason, verse 9, get rid of sin because now you're part of a new humanity in Christ.

[22 : 16] You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. Now sometimes when Paul uses this language of the old self and the new self or as the King James version puts it a bit more literally, the old man and the new man, sometimes Paul is speaking about Christians individually.

For example, 2 Corinthians 5, 17, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old has gone. The new has come. But here, I think Paul's primary emphasis is not just an individual one but a corporate one.

In other words, what Paul is saying is this. As members of the body of Christ, we have put off the old humanity embodied in Adam, characterized by sin and destined for death.

And we have put on the new humanity embodied in Christ, characterized by righteousness and destined for life. We have put off the old humanity.

We have put on the new humanity. Now, Paul uses this phrase in the same way in Ephesians 2 when he is talking about Jews and Gentiles being incorporated into one body in Christ.

[23 : 32] So, if you flip a couple pages back in your Bible and look at Ephesians 2, verse 14, it says this, for he himself, that is Christ, Christ himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

Go on to the middle of verse 15, that he might create in himself one new man, one new humanity in place of the two, so making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross.

So, this is the picture that Paul is painting, that God has drawn different, all kinds of different people into one new humanity in the body of Christ.

And if you go back to Colossians, verse 11 makes a lot of sense in this context. It's not a sort of digression, but Paul's saying here, here in the new humanity, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

Right? Paul's saying here in the new humanity, here in the body of Christ, our human distinctions need not divide us because Christ is all.

[25 : 02] He's everything. He's everything we need. And Christ is in all. He dwells in every one of His people, regardless of race, class, or nationality. You know, it's not always easy to love one another across racial and class and national lines.

You know, look down at the list in verse 11 for a moment. The Greeks were a dominant civilization at the time. They were proud of their military prowess and their intellectual heritage.

They were privileged and they tended to look down on Jews, the next one in the list. The Jews were fiercely independent. They had endured centuries of slavery and exile, but maintained their cultural traditions.

Circumcision was a source of pride for Jewish males, but Greeks mocked it and denigrated it. So, it was challenging enough for Jews and Greeks to get along, but Paul goes even further.

Barbarians. Barbarian was a pejorative term invented by the Greeks to mock people who couldn't speak Greek. They're the bar-bars. The blah, blah, blah. They speak an uncivilized language.

[26 : 15] Now, Scythian, Scythian was sort of like as far off as you can go. Scythians were nomadic tribes, who originated in southern Siberia. They were considered wild men.

They were fearsome warriors, they never bathed, and they covered themselves with tattoos. And then finally, there was the dividing line between slave and free that ran throughout the ancient world.

So, what has Paul done here? He's just listed all kinds of people who normally don't get along, who were raised on different sides of the tracks, who don't usually see eye to eye, who don't usually trust each other, who have all kinds of past history and current politics separating them.

And then, look at what he says. He says, Christ is bigger than every one of those distinctions. God is bringing people from every tribe and tongue and nation into the body of Christ, the church, and in relationship with each other.

He is conforming us together to the image of his son. You know, we live in a time and place where conversations about race and class are often fraught.

[27 : 47] Right? There's mistrust and isolation and lack of understanding, false accusations, one tribe is pitted against another.

Almost everyone feels defensive in one way or another. but the gospel frees us to let down our defenses. The gospel frees us to admit where we fall short, where we struggle to love our neighbors.

You know, I will say of all the sins in this list, this is probably one of the ones that's hardest to confess to a brother or sister in Christ to say, I struggle with prejudice.

I have trouble with some other groups of people. Because don't, isn't what we all want to say is, I'm not racist. Don't accuse me of that. Because in our culture, that's a pretty bad thing to be accused of.

But the gospel frees us to say, I don't have it all together. Whatever sin on this list it is where we specifically need help.

[28 : 56] The gospel frees us to open ourselves up to people who are different than us and to rejoice that God is bringing together all kinds of people. Greeks, Jews, barbarians, Scythians, into the body of Christ.

People who have no earthly reason to know and love each other except we belong to the new humanity and we've been bought by the blood of Christ and we're a family and we're destined for life together forever.

And that's a wonderful thing. That brings us to the fourth reason. Verse 10, get rid of sin because every day we're being renewed.

We've become part of the new humanity in Christ but God has not just done something a long time ago to rescue us. He's continuing to renew us day by day.

It's an ongoing work. God's renewing us in knowledge that is or as Romans 12 says he's transforming us by the renewing of our mind. He's renewing us after the image of the creator of the new humanity.

[30 : 00] Again, we see that theme that when God redeems us he's recreating us. He's making us all that we were meant to be as his image bearing creatures. Christ is a true image of God and we being united to Christ by the Holy Spirit's renewing power are gradually being made like him.

We're becoming who we were always meant to be and God is continuing the good work that he has begun in and among us and he's doing that as we live together as a body.

Many years ago an Anglican pastor named C.F.D. Moule wrote, Christian conduct is the result not simply of the effort to be good but of incorporation into the body of Christ.

In other words he's saying it's not just through us trying harder that we grow in Christ-likeness but as we live together in the body of Christ through the friendship and prayers teaching and counseling encouragement and accountability and constructive criticism of other Christians that God continues to renew us day by day.

So what do we need to get rid of? All sorts of spiritual junk. Why do we need to get rid of it?

Because God hates it and so should we because that's how we used to live not who we really are because now we're part of the new humanity in Christ and every day we're being renewed.

[31 : 24] So finally how do we do it? At the beginning I shared three things I needed to change in order to deal with the poison ivy in my backyard.

I want to conclude with three parallel practical ways of dealing with sin. First we need to identify sin for what it is. Paul does not talk evasively or in polite euphemisms or in categories that are so general that we don't know what he's really referring to.

Paul names sin. He calls it what it is so that we can recognize it clearly whenever it manifests itself. Sexual immorality.

Any sexual intimacy outside of male-female marriage. Impurity. Anything associated with sexual immorality that contaminates our character. Pornography falls into this category.

passion and evil desire. Out of control lust and cravings. Covetousness or greed. Now sometimes covetousness or greed seems a little more tricky to define.

[32 : 33] Right? Because there's not it's not defined by a limit on how much income you can have before you go over the line into greed and materialism.

Right? It's not quite so clear-cut as sexual immorality in one sense but John Piper has a very helpful definition. He says covetousness is desiring something so much that you lose your contentment in God.

It's a good question to ask. Am I wanting something so much that I've lost my sense of contentment and joy in God? If so that's coveting or greed or envying.

And that's why Paul says covetousness is a form of idolatry because it displaces it pushes out our worship of God. The opposite of covetousness is contentment.

Someone shared this quote with me this week. To be a Christian is to receive God's good gifts and to enjoy them the most to need them the least and to give them away most freely.

[33 : 49] To enjoy them the most to need them the least and to give them away most freely. That's the opposite of covetousness. Going on the second list anger and wrath.

Now verse 6 talks about the wrath of God and Ephesians 4 says be angry and don't sin. So when we're defining anger we need to distinguish sinful anger and godly anger. And I think one place that's very helpful for us to do this is the end of the book of Jonah.

The end of the book of Jonah God has a conversation with Jonah. And Jonah is angry and twice God asked him this question do you do well to be angry?

Jonah doesn't listen the first time he goes on his rant so God asked him a second time do you do well to be angry? It's a good question to ask ourselves when we're angry.

Is your anger helping you to live well? Is your anger helping you to live courageously? To resist complacency? To hunger for righteousness and justice not just for yourself but also for others who are vulnerable?

[35 : 04] that's a righteous anger. Or is your anger locking you up in a prison of bitterness?

Is it making you shut down emotionally until you explode in rage? Is it making you cynical toward everybody especially anyone who resembles those who have hurt you the most?

Or is it producing the fruit that Paul describes at the end of verse 8? Slander or gossip.

Obscene talk. That doesn't just mean cursing. It literally means shameful words. It could include ridiculing or embarrassing others.

Those kinds of words that cut others down. Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. So we need to identify sin for what it is.

[36 : 07] Second, do some research how to get rid of it. Don't assume that you have all the wisdom you need within you to deal with sin.

Search the scriptures for what they have to say about the specific issues you're dealing with. for many people, memorizing scriptures has been a really helpful thing to do.

Scriptures that you can bring to mind when you're in the moment and when you're tempted to fly off the handle or tempted to whatever. Also, there are lots of good books downstairs on the book stall and some of them address many of these issues.

just a few. Good and Angry by David Powlison. Very helpful book. Closing the Window by Tim Chester that deals with pornography. Money, Possessions, and Eternity by Randy Alcorn.

Or A Loving Life in a World of Broken Relationships. If you're dealing with, if you're struggling with resentment or bitterness, by Paul Miller, A Loving Life.

[37 : 20] It's a great book. But whether or not you read a book, ask for help. Ask for advice. Ask for prayer. Ask for accountability from your brothers and sisters in Christ. And take the advice you receive to heart.

Now, I'm not saying everybody's advice is always going to be exactly what you need to hear.

Sometimes you'll get bad advice. That's why compare it against the scriptures and ask more than one person. But if it's in line with the scriptures, and especially if a couple of people are sort of getting at the same thing, take their advice to heart even if it's not what you wanted to hear.

That's why we need each other. Because we don't always see things clearly on our own. If things are really deep and complex, consider seeking out a pastor or a counselor if you haven't already.

And when you explain your issues, be transparent. Because nobody can help you if they don't know what you need help with. all the sins in verse 5 and verse 8 are bad enough.

Lying about them is even worse. And deliberately hiding them from someone who is directly affected by them counts as lying. It's interesting that Paul doesn't just include lying in one of the lists.

[38 : 40] He adds it on at the end as a separate command, even though it disrupts the symmetry of the passage. There's a nice symmetry of the passage if you eliminate the lying command. Five vices, two reasons to avoid them.

Five more vices in verse 8 and two more reasons to avoid them in verses 9 and 10. And Paul adds in, do not lie to each other. I think he perhaps puts it that way for emphasis.

Lying or deception is particularly significant because it breaks trust. It makes others feel vulnerable, tentative, and unsafe. Trust can be rebuilt, but it does take time.

Telling the truth can be painful, awkward, costly, and embarrassing, but it's the only way forward.

First John talks about if we walk in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

So let's walk in the light. bring these things out into the light. Share them with a brother or sister in Christ if you haven't already, so they can pray for you and encourage you and hold you accountable.

[39 : 55] So identify sin for what it is, do some research how to get rid of it, ask for advice and help, and finally pull it out by the roots. How do you pull something out by the roots?

You have to bend down on your knees. we need to pray. And we need to bring to bear upon it the power of the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ is the most powerful tool we have as Christians to root out sin, not just to pull off a few leaves or to weed whack it and then have it grow back again, but to really get down and pull it out by its roots.

Because the cross shows us two things. The cross shows us that there are no sins that are simply excusable. All the sins in these lists are bad enough that they required the death of the Son of God Himself to atone for them.

But the cross also shows us that there are no sins in these lists. There are no sins that make you unredeemable. And isn't that the lie that many of us struggle with?

[41 : 18] We think, yes, I've done all these sins, or many of them, or one of them, and the guilt is overwhelming, and I will never escape it, and I'm unredeemable.

And the cross of Christ says no. Christ died to redeem us from all sin. In fact, Hebrews 12 says, for the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross.

What was that joy? The joy of bringing us with Him to glory. The joy of calling us His brothers and sisters. The joy of incorporating us into His body, into the new humanity with Him as our head.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The cross says Christ has died to cleanse us from every sin and to take us all the way with Him to glory.

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, let's put sin to death by the power of Christ. Let's pray. Amen.

Father, we thank You that You speak to us plainly and clearly in Your Word.

[42 : 38] We thank You that You expose our sin, what is destructive to ourselves and to one another and dishonoring to You.

But we thank You that You have given us the power in Christ because of His atoning death on the cross for us, because of His victorious resurrection, because of the gift of the Holy Spirit that You have shed abroad in our hearts.

Lord, You have given us the power to fight against these sins, to identify them, to root them out. We thank You for Your renewing power. We thank You, Lord, that we are being renewed day by day in knowledge after the image of our Creator.

We thank You that we are being renewed as a body. Lord, I could do that renewing work even now, even today, and throughout this week as we pray with one another and fellowship with one another and seek to encourage each other in these ways.

We pray that You would prevent us from falling into either pride and self-righteousness or despair and hopelessness, but that You would fix our eyes on our glorious Savior and that You would continue the good work that You've begun in and among us.

[44 : 14] We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.