

**“Put Off”  
Colossians  
Colossians 3:1-11  
05/14/2023**

Over the next few weeks you’re going to be in Colossians 3. And at the core of this chapter, particularly the first 17 verses, is what the Bible would call *sanctification*. The work of God, over the course of our lives, where He shapes us to look more like Jesus. Paul is going to return back to two contrasting realities he set up for us in chapter 1. And this is a contrast you see throughout the Scriptures – *heaven* and *earth*. As we said week 1, God’s original design was for those to be overlapped. The Garden of Eden was this place of the merging of Heaven and Earth, God dwelling in loving intimacy with his creation, everything was very good. But then as we know the story goes it's ripped apart by sin, those two realities are now contrasting, and so Jesus comes to *reconcile*, or bring it and us back together. That’s at the center of Colossians 3 – the work God is doing, and our participation in that work – to merge heaven and earth within us.

And a part of that which Pastor Jake will explore next week is what we, in the language of the passage **“put on”**. What we learn to start living into. That what would mark the lived reality of our lives – how we live and move and have our being – would look more like what marked Christ – love, peace, forgiveness, grace, thanksgiving, gratitude. Beautiful stuff. What people should be able to see when they look at how we live.

But, as we’ll explore today – a huge part of our sanctification is not just what we’ll start doing and living into, but also what we’ll *stop doing*. What will no longer mark our lives because we are followers of Jesus. That there are things we must “put off” according to Paul – stop living into.

And this process of stopping those things, the Bible calls *mortification* – **The putting to death of sin in our lives**. The difficult, painful, more often than not probably should involve some tears act of saying “I’m not going to do this anymore.” That’s what we’re talking about today.

**Happy Mother’s Day, the guest preacher is here to talk about killing sin.**

But it doesn’t start there for Paul. Paul doesn’t get right into “here’s what you need to stop doing.” We first have to remember, in the words of my friend Mark – **“This is who I am now.”**

Colossians 3:1-4

Let’s get into it together...

**Col 3:1-4 – 1 If then you have been raised with Christ...**

Pause real quick. Paul gives a really clear qualifier on everything else he’s about to say. *If you have been raised with Christ*. Our position with God in Christ matters for the rest of the things you’re going to see this week and next. If you have not been raised in Christ, if you have not been born again, if you have not laid your yes down, if you have not surrendered to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, this vision God has for you and the things we're about to read next do not apply to you.

**...seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.**

If you’re a follower of Jesus – if you’ve been raised with Christ – then the whole summation of your life is in this phrase – “seek the things that are above.” If Jesus is everything, live as if He’s everything. Want the stuff of Jesus. How? He tell us...

**2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

When you become a Christian, when you put your faith in Jesus – you participate, according to the Scriptures, with Christ in His death and resurrection. Just as Christ died physically, you too die spiritually to what the Bible calls your old self. Your flesh. Your sin nature – That dies. It's done away with.

And just as Christ rose from the dead physically, you too rise spiritually to what the Bible calls a new self. A new creation.

**Romans 6:6-11 – 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

That's what Paul is grounding us in here in Colossians 3. Before we start talking about mortification and killing sin – first remember your old self has died with Christ. You are set free from the penalty and power of sin. If you are in Christ you are no longer under judgment or condemnation. You are no longer bearing the guilt and penalty and punishment for your sins. But you're also free from the power of sin. Your old self has died.

Christ is now your life. You have been raised with Him! This is who you are now, not because of anything you've done but only and forever by the mercy and grace of God. So seek the things that are above.

Colossians 3:5

**Now, in light of that, Paul says – here's an essential part of how you seek the things that are above...  
5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...**

Want to know how to seek what is heavenly? Start by killing what is earthly. But wait you told me it was already dead? Yes it is...but there's still those pulls and things within us that linger.

**Glitter.** A few weeks ago Harper, our 3 year old, came home from preschool with every parent's worst nightmare – a craft with glitter on it. It was this 8.5x11 piece of paper and it was just glitter, just pure glitter. And she's so excited running around the house with it. And eventually we did what every smart parent would do in that situation – we threw it away.

But here's what happens – what am I still doing weeks later (and will probably for the next few months to come), everytime I sit on the couch in our playroom, I see little specks of glitter that still remain. And I have to pick them up, take them off the couch, and throw them in the garbage. The glitter craft has been destroyed, but the remains still live on and must be dealt with.

That's the image Paul is painting for us – you have died. What was earthly in you does not reign over you anymore. You are no longer a slave to your earthly passions and desires. But there's still those pieces that must be dealt with.

Just like the creation around us lives in the already but not yet – The Kingdom of heaven is here and breaking out but not yet in full – the same is true for us in regards to holiness. We live, ourselves, in an already but not yet state. Sanctification is a process, it's not instantaneous.

**So because we have died, we then learn how to further put to death what is still earthly in us.**

We kill sin that lingers in our lives. We put it away, to use the language of verse 8.

- We don't mess with sin.

- We don't play with sin.
- We don't see how close we can get to sin.
- We kill sin.

**Snake.** Our house in CLT backs up to a little stream and some woods. I'm becoming a nature guy recently, it's new for me, I'm learning to sit outside, look at trees, and enjoy them. It's great. But one of the pitfalls of living next to some woods and a stream is snakes. Which Lindsay and I both hate with a passion. You want to see mama bear come out – snakes. She is ready.

A few weeks ago she was coming home and saw a 4 foot snake right in the middle of the driveway. And let me just tell you – I never knew a Honda Odyssey could be such a snake-killing machine. She ran it over. Backed up over it. Ran it over again. And then just for good measure she backed up over it one more time.

That's the picture of killing sin. That's mortification. You don't pick up the snake, wrap it around your arms, have some fun and see if it'll bite or not – you turn your Honda Odyssey into a killing machine.

You kill it. You put it to death.

In the words of Puritan John Owen – "**Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.**"

Sin We Learn to Kill

What do we kill? Paul gives us a few lists. Not exhaustive, but enough to encompass quite a bit.

- **Sexual Immorality** – Any sexual activity you give your body or mind to that is not in God's design for sex between a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage. Having sex with someone who's not your spouse. Looking at porn. Having sexual thoughts about your coworker.
- **Impurity** – He goes further than just sexual impurity – this is any moral corruption. You're shady at work, deceitful in a friendship, lie a little bit on your taxes – that's impurity.
- **Passion + Evil Desire** – He's talking about impulses or compulsions that are out of step with God's desire for your life. Those evil impulses where you just can't help yourself but do what you know is wrong.
- **Covetousness + Idolatry** – Believing at your core God is withholding from you something that you deserve and see someone else has. It's saying to God at our core – "You don't know what you're doing because you haven't given this (thing, person, relationship, etc) to me, and I need it."

Look at how series these things are, verse 6...**6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming.**

I think one of the biggest, silliest lies that has ever happened in Christianity is this – "God is a God of love. Therefore, he could never be angry with anyone. If God is a God of love, there is no room for him to have any wrath."

**But common sense would tell you the greater the love, the greater the capacity for wrath, right?**

If you came over to my house with a baseball bat, and started hitting my fence, I'd be kind of weirded out and a little afraid but ok no big deal. If you started hitting my cars, I'd be a little bit more angry. If you started swinging at my kids or my wife – let's just say Liam Neeson is not the only one with a set of particular skills.

Love drives wrath. The greater the love, the greater the wrath. God loves his creation – he cannot and will not sit by while we destroy ourselves. That's what this list is – it looks compelling, it looks intriguing – it's end is all destruction. Sexual immorality destroys the image of God, turns people into objects to be used for our own gratification and pleasure. Impurity + Passion leads to all sorts of corruption and brokenness. Covetousness and idolatry kill our relationships, kill our contentment, kill our joy.

It brings destruction and devastation to what God cherishes and loves, namely you and me, so he is rightly wrathful.

But then Paul turns again to some more good news – **7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.**

That's who you were, Christians, but not anymore!! You *used* to do that thing. But this is who you are now, so you can put that stuff away.

**Then he gives us another list:**

- **Anger + Wrath** – our lashing out at one another, holding grudges, holding in our hearts bitterness and frustration against one another.
- **Malice + Slander** – doing harm to one another. We won't necessarily go up and punch someone in the face when we hate them, we'll just spread some untrue things about them instead. We'll just slander them to our friends, run their name through the mud.
- **Obscene Talk** – And if that doesn't work, instead of slandering them behind their back, we'll just say it to their face. We'll bring great harm and great destruction to someone through our words.

**We learn to kill these sins. We learn to put them away. We drive over them, back up, and drive over them again.**

- I don't let sexual immorality have a place in my life.
- I don't let me eye wander, I don't let my thoughts go there.
- I don't minimize that bitterness I let linger towards God for what He's not giving me.
- I don't think my lack of forgiveness is no big deal.
- I don't participate in that gossip session just because it feels good to have a laugh and be included.

I kill sin before it starts killing me. It's harmful to me. It's cutting me off from this integration of being more who God has called me and designed me *and saved me* to be.

Mortification is Slow

**Now, I've been in church and been a pastor long enough to know this is where the sermon gets tricky. Believe it or not, that was the easy part.**

But here's the part in the sermon where you, if you're on board with what I've been saying, now expect me to have the answer for what to do. Tell me now, preacher guy, how to kill sin. This is the part in the pastoral meeting where I'm sitting across from the person stuck in a decade of pornography addiction, and they're looking at me like – give me the three step formula. Where's my 4 steps to killing sin, pastor?

Because here's the reality – **mortification of sin takes way longer, is much more painful, and much simpler than any of us want to believe.**

As with everything else in life, we want it now...

- Food? Now.
- Getting to my destination? Now.
- Wifi Connection, my Netflix to load? Now.
- Deep friendships with these people I just met? Now.
- Holiness?? Now.

Give me the three steps and here we go.

But sanctification, killing sin – is a slow process. And when we don't get this → we can live in a constant state of disillusionment, unrest, or frustration, actually keeping ourselves from the very tools God has given us to kill sin in the first place.

Here's what I mean...this is from Bill Hull, guru on all things discipleship - "**A very common question to any plan for spiritual formation among church members is, 'How can we speed this up?' The consumer culture in which we live is a world of consumption, assertiveness, speed, and fame. Impatience is the most accepted sin in Western culture...The problem with impatience is that it short-circuits the forming of Christ in persons. With a consumer mentality, there is no basis to enter into a life of submission and humility...They begin to believe that if they can get a handle on this character flaw of uncontrolled anger in the next two months, it will be taken care of. If it doesn't work, then they need to find a better teacher, church, curriculum, husband, wife, or workplace. Changing my circumstances will change me.**"

**Maybe you find yourself in this spot:**

- Maybe you've been in a **LifeGroup** for 2 years, and you're like – I keep confessing the same sin pattern, the same struggle, the same tendency – and it just feels like nothing has changed.
- Maybe you went to **Recovery** and you're like – I did the hard thing. I walked through the whole program, did the inventories, dealt with my past some, and it still feels like I'm just as broken as when it started.
- Maybe you **came to Jesus 15-20 years ago** thinking – this is doing to end my addiction, but it's just as tempting now as it was then.

If only, man, can you imagine how easy my job would be if I could preach one sermon series, have one counseling session, one coffee with someone in our church and suddenly all their problems and patterns of sin are done away with? Being a pastor would be the easiest job on the planet!

But that's not how it works. And our insistence or belief that it does or should happen that way is actually a barrier to us being formed into the image of Christ at all!

Living Out Your Identity

**Instead what do we do? We give ourselves to the same things we know to give ourselves to.**

- **We show up to Group.** Even when we don't want to. We consider with other Christians how to apply the Scriptures into our lives. We share our sin, we remember the gospel together. We pray for one another. We encourage one another. We go home and we do it again next week.
- **We show up to the Gathering on Sundays.** We call our hearts back to worship. We sing, we lift our hands, we worship even when we don't want to. We receive teaching from God's Word, we eat the bread and drink the cup. And we go home and we do it again next week.
- **We resist snoozing our alarm clock, we drag ourselves to the arm chair, we open up God's Word.** We pause and we breathe, trying to remember in the haze of our tired minds – God is here. And we pray. And we read the Scriptures. We repent. We ask God for help to face our day. We fall asleep a little bit, we jolt back awake and try to keep reading. We close our Bible, there's kids to feed, work to accomplish, chores to do and errands to run. We go to bed. We wake up the next day and we do it again.
- **We set a time in the week for the practice of fasting.** We know this helps train us to say no to our impulses and desires and yes to God. We know this is a way we grow our ability to kill sin. Most of the day we just kind of sulk in hunger. We're more miserable than rejoicing. We finally get to eat at dinner and we forgot most of the day why we were fasting. And then we go to bed, and we mark on the calendar when we'll do it again next week.

- **We are hurt by our spouse, by our friend.** They said something they shouldn't have. There's real hurt and there's real pain but we, by the power of the Spirit, muster up the strength and courage to forgive, to reconcile. Knowing that in a week, or probably even less, they're going to have to do the same to forgive us.

**Do you see my point?**

How do you kill sin? **By being a Christian. By living the mundane, repetitive, often boring, seems to be unhelpful in the moment, stuff of the Christian life.**

Do you see this? Right? Most of this passage is not about what we're supposed to do, it's about who we're supposed to be. ***If you have been raised with Christ...You have died...Your life is hidden with Christ...You used to be this...but now look at what you are!***

Look at verse 9, this will hopefully make this make sense...

**9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.**

I used to think verse 9 was Paul's kind of final tack on to the list. One more thing he just sort of wanted to add in - put away anger, malice, and lying. But that's actually not what he's addressing here. He's addressing the idea of false living. Put away all these things, kill your sin, Paul says – because if you keep living into these things you're living an identity that is not true. You've put these things off, you're being renewed to look more like Jesus, you're being sanctified, you've died and risen again with Christ – stop lying by living a life that is incongruent with that.

You have a deeper identity now. **You're a Christian!** And your life is now hidden with Christ in God. You are now a child of the heavenly. You are now a new creation, a royal priest, a chosen child in the family of God.

**If you are a Christian your truest identity is no longer sinner.** I know that's how we can posture ourselves sometimes. We show up to group, we confess our sin and we kind of shrug our shoulders – “I know, I'm a sinner.” But that's not actually your identity anymore if you are in Christ Jesus. **You are a saint.**

So how do we kill sin? We live like a saint.

**Stephens.** I had a close friend in high school that was a part of one of “those families”. You know what I'm talking about. Like they're all too close. They have their own family hashtag. (No shame if that's you, just know you're one of those). And it was sort of weird, but one of the things that I find really admirable, especially now that I'm building my own family is how clearly his family identity shaped his behavior.

Whenever we would be hanging out and wanting to get into trouble, as you do in high school, you always got the same response from this kid. He would always say – “Sorry, I'm a Stephens, we don't do that.”

- Hey man, you want to go TP that person's yard? Sorry, I'm a Stephens, we don't do that.
- Hey man, you want to prank call that nerdy kid at school? Sorry, I'm a Stephens, we don't do that.
- You want to go mess with the workers at Walmart (I lived in a small town ok?) Sorry, I'm a Stephens, we don't do that.

**“This is who I am, I am not going to do this anymore.”**

**Do you want to kill sin? Go deeper into who you are in Christ.**

- You want to offer sexual immorality to me? Swipe-left hookup culture? I'm loved by the God of the universe who knows me deeply and calls me His own. No thanks, I'm good.

- You want to tempt me to be burned up by my anger and bitterness? The one who never sinned died for me, you want to talk about undeserved grace? I can surely show that too.
- You want to lure me with coveting, doubting the goodness of God? I'm a child of the king with an eternal inheritance that is kept pure and undefiled for me with God forever.

And on and on and we go. Learning to live deeper into who God has already declared us to be.

**If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are heavenly, and put to death what is earthly.**

**Pray for folks.**