

## **Becoming Like Jesus – Pt. 2: Putting to Death Earthly Things**

(Colossians 3:5-11)

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The text read this morning, Colossians 3:1-17, speaks at length about how to become like Jesus.
  - A. If you are like me, when I think about becoming like Jesus my mind moves more toward the last part of the text (3:12-17), than the first eleven verses.
    - i. That is because Jesus' compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, etc., are the things that seem to affect us the most, being the things that draw us to Jesus and give us hope.
    - ii. And we know that having these characteristics are what others will quickly see in us and be drawn to Christ by them.
  - B. But having compassion, kindness, etc., without holiness, purity, and righteousness is of little value to God in this world.
    - i. For, Christ's compassion, gentleness, and kindness could not have saved us without His holiness, purity, and righteousness that was required for his sacrifice for sins.
    - ii. And, compassion, gentleness, etc., in our lives, if it is shown without holiness and righteousness, will often lead to compromise with sin, which Jesus never did.
2. In addition to this, to fully develop compassion, kindness, gentleness, etc., we must:
  - A. Accept that we have died to the things of this earth and been raised to seek the things above where Christ is, just as we talked about a few weeks ago (3:1-4).
  - B. As I want to talk about today, clean from our hearts and lives the self-seeking and unloving ways of our old selves that are incompatible with the new self renewed in Christ (3:5-11).
    - i. It is like planting a vegetable garden that requires preparation before production.
    - ii. For, the good plants cannot thrive unless the weeds, which soak up the ground's needed nutrients, are first removed, and continue to be removed.
3. So, I hope you can see the importance of these seemingly "negative" lessons that must be applied first in preparation for the addition of the "positive" characteristics of Christ in our lives (3:12-17).
4. Therefore, today I want to consider how we must put off the **old self** and its sinful ways in favor of the **new self** that is renewed in the knowledge of Christ (3:5-11).

### **BODY:**

#### **I. "Consider the members of your earthly body as dead" (3:5-8):**

- A. Because we have been raised from the dead, we must *kill* our old selves (3:5 – "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.").
  1. Though the NASB says "consider the members...as dead," which expresses the thought, most modern translations (ESV, HCSB, ISV, NET, NIV, NKJV) better render this "put to death."
    - a. The NKJV is the most literal in rendering the Greek as "put to death your *members*."
    - b. Though this is not literal, we should not ignore the vivid nature of the metaphor.
      - i. We must act drastically, radically, in dealing with our sin, cutting off its lifelines without pity!
      - ii. The sins of the old self should be seen like a gangrenous limb to the eyes of a surgeon, requiring swift and complete removal to save the body.
    - c. So, life in Christ means refusing to allow sin any life within us (Rom. 6:11-13 – "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, <sup>13</sup> and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.").
  2. So, a Christian must kill any illicit gratification of sexual desires and the corrupt mind behind them (3:5b):

- a. We must put to death **immorality** (*porneia*) – illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, unchastity, homosexuality, lesbianism, prostitution; to engage in sexual immorality of any kind (*Thayer, BDAG, Louw and Nida*).
  - i. Most modern translations correctly translate this word as “sexual immorality,” which brings out the broad nature of the word’s application.
  - ii. In fact, the Truth Commentary on Colossians says, “In the LXX the word **fornication** (*porneia*) is used to translate the Hebrew word *zanah* which is **a general word for sexual looseness** and may include the married.”
  - iii. Therefore, upon coming into Christ, we must reject the broad and complete spectrum of sexual immorality in our lives, refusing to participate in it in any way or form.
    - 1) This must be true despite the world’s push to accept and even celebrate sexual immorality, especially in its basest of forms, which wears upon our sensitivities!
    - 2) For, sexual immorality destroys any hope of eternal life (1 Cor. 6:9-10 – “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither **fornicators**, nor idolaters, nor **adulterers**, nor effeminate, nor **homosexuals**,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”).
- b. We must put to death **impurity** (*akatharsia*) – here means moral impurity, including all sexual sins, (but also) a state of *moral corruption* (*BDAG, Mounce, Thayer*)
  - i. Impurity has a definite connection with sexual sin (Gal. 5:19 – “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: *immorality, impurity, sensuality*”).
  - ii. Though all sexual sins are included, it highlights the contamination of character effected by such behavior (1 Cor. 6:18 – “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”).
    - 1) These words are not to downplay the seriousness of other sins.
    - 2) Instead, it is to emphasize the seriousness of the affect sexual sins have on us, on our person, leading to greater depravity.
3. As the list continues, Paul moves away from sinful **actions** to the **source** of these sexual sins, which is the corruption of the heart/mind that must be put to death as well.
  - a. We must put to death **passion/lust** – esp. of a sexual nature, lustful passion, passionate desire, depraved passion/desire (*BDAG, Thayer*)
    - i. One might lust for something in sinful fashion that is not sexual in nature.
    - ii. Yet, in the NT it generally means depraved/vile sexual passions (1 Thess. 4:3-5 – “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you **abstain from sexual immorality**;<sup>4</sup> that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,<sup>5</sup> not in **lustful passion**, like the Gentiles who do not know God.”).
  - b. **Evil desire** – although difficult to distinguish from passion, it suggests a meaning of *all evil longings*, which may be broader than passion/lust.
    - i. The mention of this and passion/lust show us that evil, lustful thoughts must not be allowed to linger in our minds. There must be a plan of evasive action!
    - ii. This requires a change of view of past evil, that it no longer has our affections!
  - c. **Covetousness, which is idolatry** – “greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice” (*Thayer*).
    - i. That this is characterized as idolatry and associated with immorality and impurity should open our eyes to its seriousness.
    - ii. Any time our desire for something takes precedence over our relationship with God, it is idolatry.
  - d. What is the point of grouping these sins together?
    - i. It is depraved passion, evil longings, and coveting that produce sexual sins and illicit sexual relationships.

- ii. So, in putting away sinful actions, if we hope to remain pure, we must also put away the thoughts and longings of the heart/mind that lead to these sins!
- B. Why this is so vital (3:6-7 – “For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.”).
1. These sins bring God’s wrath (3:6a).
    - a. God’s wrath refers to His **hatred of sin/evil**, as well as His **judicial attack** upon sin/evil that follows (see TDNT 5: 425)
    - b. God’s reaction to those who live in sin is not arbitrarily, but a necessary response of his true holiness, justice, and goodness to wickedness, exploitation, and evil of every kind.
      - i. It is amazing that Hell has been taken out of the picture in people’s thinking in preference of a God who “loves too much to punish.”
      - ii. Such a God could not be just or good any more than could our court system be just and good that “loved too much” to punish evil people.
      - iii. True holiness, justice, and goodness demand an equally true response to evil!
    - c. Though the NASB has that the wrath of God “will come,” most other modern translations have God’s wrath “is coming/comes” which correctly represents the *present tense*.
      - i. Thus, God’s wrath is evident, it seems, now and as it will be in the Day of Judgment!
      - ii. Paul addresses this wrath in the present for those who choose to live in sin (Rom. 1:24-26 – “Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts **to impurity** (same word), so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. <sup>25</sup> For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. <sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them over **to degrading passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, <sup>27</sup> and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. <sup>28</sup> And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over **to a depraved mind**, to do those things which are not proper, <sup>29</sup> being filled with all **unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips.**”).
        - 1) Note the progression (impurity, degradation, and depravity of hearts/minds) and how what follows involves **violence** and **harm** to themselves and others.
        - 2) What people do not understand is that sin has a dehumanizing effect on the sinner.
        - 3) Sexual sin and perversion are why we have become such a violent society!
  2. And despite our world’s desire to justify every one of these sins, those who commit these sins are “sons of disobedience” (3:6b-7)!
    - a. Again, there is emphasis on how these sins characterized their/our past life.
    - b. Paul adds that they were “living in them,” emphasizing their participation in these sins.
    - c. The point is simple. Christians put to death the old ways because they stand in such contrast to how we must now live (1 Pet. 1:14-16 – “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; <sup>16</sup> because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”).

## II. Put off sins against others (3:8-11):

- A. Note how this list moves from sins involving illicit sexual actions and desires to sins related to how we treat others.
  1. Again, this fits the progression that is firmly established in God’s word but ignored by the world.
  2. For, to treat others properly, we must first gain control of sexual lusts and passions.

3. For, acceptance of sin and perversion, though heralded as love, compassion, forbearance, respect, etc., result in dehumanizing ourselves and the devaluing of human life in general.
  4. So, the more sexual sin and perversion, the more anger, wrath, malice, slander, lies, etc., will characterize our society, **just as we are seeing today!**
- B. As sexual sin is put to death, sinful treatment of others must also be *put off*, removed, or cast away from us (3:8 – “But now you also, **put them all aside**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.”).
1. These sins of our old selfish and self-centered man are to be *stripped from us* and *cast aside* as we would an old, worn-out garment, never to be worn again.
    - a. This is far more difficult than we might think.
    - b. For, like old garments, they are often our most comfortable and the easiest to wear!
  2. We are first told to put off sins of *attitude*:
    - a. **Anger** – anger, indignation, wrath (**BDAG**) to which *Thayer* adds, “temper...agitation of the soul...any violent emotion”
      - i. This same word used for the wrath of God (3:6) as well as Jesus’ anger (Mk. 3:5).
      - ii. So, how can God’s wrath/anger be a sign of His righteousness but one of sin in us?
        - 1) Though we can be angry and not sin (Eph. 4:26), unlike God our anger in most often the product of personal resentment and provocation.
        - 2) God’s anger, on the other hand, as we have said, is the product of righteousness, holiness, and justice.
        - 3) So, we would be wise to always ask if our anger is *because evil has been done*, or *because evil has been done to us*.
    - b. **Wrath** –difficult to distinguish from anger, but in lists as this it is believed to be more unsettled feeling that boils up quickly, produces vengeful actions, and quickly resides.
      - i. But, for one who might take comfort in how his/her wrath quickly subsides, you should not.
      - ii. For, great damage is often done in these quick outbursts of wrath—damage that takes a great deal of time to fix!
    - c. **Malice** – generally the evil intentions of an angry person, the mind set on bringing injury to another.
      - i. *Thayer* says it means “malignity, ill-will, desire to injure.”
      - ii. Whenever we find ourselves of a mind to *hurt* someone, no matter what they may have done to us, we have crossed the line separating us from sin and our old self!
  3. We must put off sins of the tongue [which are the most difficult]:
    - a. **Slander** (*blasphēmia*) – “slander, detraction, injurious speech to another’s good name; (2) impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty” (*Thayer*)
      - i. Though we generally apply *blasphemy* to speech against God, here it refers to injurious speech directed at others.
      - ii. It, like anger, wrath, and malice from which it comes, results in harm of another and is contrary to the way of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21-23 – “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,<sup>22</sup> Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;<sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously”).
    - b. **Filthy language** – this can refer to obscene language or abusive language.
      - i. One rendered it “foul-mouthed abuse.”
      - ii. Though abusive language fits the context better, both do harm in contaminating the speaker and the hearer and are indicative of a heart untouched by God’s grace.
- C. **Do not lie to/about/against one another** (3:9b-11 – “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—<sup>11</sup> a renewal in which

there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.”).

1. **Lie** – to seek to deceive through falsehood, whether by words or actions
2. Paul gives special attention to lying by setting it apart from the other sins, changing the tense to the present, and giving a lengthier explanation of why it must be put off.
  - a. The change to the present tense indicates this was an issue at Colossae.
  - b. It could have come in the form of gossip, careless speech, half-truths, etc.
3. Whatever the form, it must be put away, because (3:9b-11)...
  - a. You have put aside the old self, the lost/condemned self, and put on the new self that is being renewed in knowledge and after the image of God (3:9).
    - i. What is being renewed requires that the old be dealt with.
    - ii. You do not keep what is old and faulty on what you are seeking to renew.
  - b. We are all one in Christ, whether Jew or Greek, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian [foreign—savage], slave, or free (3:10-11).
    - i. Lying must end because it hurts the body of which we are part (Eph. 4:25 – “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, **for we are members of one another.**”).
    - ii. If we see our new self as we should, we should see that any lie we tell is like lying to ourselves—like the eye lying to the ear, seeing we are all members of one another.
    - iii. Ignoring this command has serious consequences (Rev. 21:8 – “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”).

#### CONCLUSION:

1. So, as I hope you can see, God expects our lives to change drastically upon coming into Christ.
  - A. As those who have died to sin and been raised with Christ, we are to *kill* the members our bodies, cutting off the lifeline to sexual sins and the desires, lusts, and passions that fuel them.
  - B. In addition to this must follow the putting off of the old ways of sin that are self-centered and intended to harm, to injure, those around us.
2. To do otherwise is to live earthly lives characterized by the deeds of the old man, **which brings God’s wrath!**
3. Christ alone offers to you a chance to put to death the old person of sin and to begin a new life, one raised to newness and purity and hope by God’s power and grace to forgive you of your sins.
4. Will you come to Jesus acknowledging your sin and submitting to him as your Lord and Savior by F-R-C-Bp?