

“Putting Sin to Death”

July 9, 2017

Colossians 3:5-9a

I. Introduction

Paul began the application part of his letter to the Colossians by telling his Christian readers in [Colossians 3:1-2](#) “to set their hearts and minds on things above, not on earthly things.” When a person makes Jesus his Lord and Savior, at the moment of salvation he is justified by Jesus’ blood and is reconciled to God—[Romans 5:9 & 11](#) say, “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! . . . Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” Through Jesus’ death, we have died to sin’s penalty, but sin’s power still can be strong and our flesh weak.

Believers are works in progress, as we read last week in [Philippians 3:12](#), “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” The battle with sin is common to all believers, even Paul had issues, in [Romans 7:19](#) he wrote, “For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing.” [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) says, “if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” Although believers are new creatures on the inside, the new creatures live in old bodies. For this reason, our bodies can be used as instruments for righteousness or for iniquity/sin. [Romans 12:2](#) tells how one can be victorious, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Every Christian has a choice.

Writing to Christians, then and now, Paul wrote to “put to death” the old way of life; i.e. “your earthly nature.” Since we have died with Christ ([Colossians 3:3](#)) we have the spiritual power to kill the earthly, fleshly desires that want to control us—as [Romans 6:11](#) says, “Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” In today’s Scripture Paul gave two sample lists of sins that belong to the old life and have no place in our new life in Christ. The lists are not exhaustive, but they include

some of the most common and troubling sins believers face. In between the two lists, Paul gave two reasons for putting sin to death.

II. Putting Sin to Death

A. Sexual Sins The first list is comprised mainly of sexual sins. It begins with particular actions and thoughts and progresses to the motive.

1. Sexual immorality The first sin listed, “*immorality*,” comes from the Greek word *πορνεία* from which we get the English word *porno* and *prostitute*; it is the root word for *pornography*. In this case it means any form of prohibited sex. Contrary to ancient cultures and our culture today, the Bible strictly forbids any sexual activity outside the marriage bond between a man and a woman. Any sexual immorality is not proper behavior for Christians—**Ephesians 5:3** says, “**But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.**” Turn to **1 Thessalonians 4:3-5**.

2. 2nd Paul lists impurity—other translations use “uncleanness.” Impurity is a more general term than immorality; it goes beyond the act to the sinful thoughts and intentions of the mind. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:28**, “**But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**” Sinful behavior begins with sinful thoughts. The battle against all sin begins in the mind. Evil thoughts produce sinful behavior and pure thoughts produce righteous behavior, this is why **Philippians 4:8** says, “**Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.**”

3. Next Paul lists lust and evil desires. Lust, also called “shameful passion,” and evil desires are similar. Lust is uncontrolled or illicit sexual desire or appetite—it involves actions. Evil desires are sinful thoughts of intense sexual desire or appetite; actions may not be there, but a person continues to meditate on these thoughts. What we desire usually determines what we do; in terms of all sin, we

need to echo David's prayer in [Psalm 51:10](#), "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

4. Greed Finally, after he had named these sensual sins, Paul added "and greed, or covetousness, which is idolatry." Greed is the base from which all the previous sins spring. Greed is the insatiable desire to have more, to have what is forbidden. The greedy or covetous person is never satisfied with what he has, and he is usually envious of what other people do have. [James 4:2](#) points out that it is the source of fights and quarrels as well as lusts, passion, and sin.

Because it places selfish desires above obedience to God, greed is a form of idolatry. Greed, or covetousness, is forbidden in the 10th Commandment, and this sin can make us break all of the other nine commandments. A greedy person will dishonor God, take God's name in vain, lie, steal, and commit every other sin in order to satisfy his sinful desires. When people sin, they are basically doing what they desire, rather than what God desires. By putting themselves ahead of God, they or their desires have become their own god; they are idolaters.

Before going on to his second list, Paul stopped to give two *Reasons for putting sin to death*.

B. Reasons for putting sin to death

1. Sin brings God's judgment. [Colossians 3:6](#) says, "Because of these, the wrath of God is coming"—sin brings God's judgment. Sin brings wrath, not blessing. This is why one should never expect God to bless a sinful activity. For this reason, sin can never bring true, lasting happiness.

[1 Thessalonians 1:10](#) says, "Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." Believers have been delivered from the wrath of God at the final judgment. But, as the children of God, they are subject to His discipline—turn to [Hebrews 12:5-7](#). God will react against sin. The unbeliever will experience God's eternal wrath; the believer will experience God's loving chastening. Either way, all who pursue sin will suffer the consequences.—judgment.

2. Sin is part of the believer's past. In verse 7 of [Colossians 3](#) Paul gave the 2nd reason for putting sin to death: "You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived," i.e. sin is part of the

believer's past. [Ephesians 2:1-2](#) put it this way, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." Why would anyone who has been made rich return to the slums to live in poverty? How can a new creature act like an old one? As [Romans 6:2](#) says, "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"

C. Social Sins

After warning about the sensual sins, Paul then pointed out the dangers of the social sins. Sins that are committed directly against other people. Sadly, sins that are acceptable by many people today. Paul said that just as a person takes off his dirty clothes at the end of the day, so should believers rid themselves of the filthy rags of their old life of sin.

1. Anger Paul began with anger. Anger is a deep, long-lasting bitterness that continually burns within a person. Issues don't create anger, but merely reveal that a person is an angry person and give him a target for his fury.

2. Rage The 2nd sin, rage or wrath, refers to a sudden outburst of anger. It is anger that tries to take revenge and get even. The Greeks likened it to a fire in straw that flares up briefly and is gone. Anger and rage are closely related. The churning, boiling anger that lies just below the surface gives rise to eruptions of rage. Neither are acceptable for Christians—[Ephesians 4:31](#) says, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."

3. Malice Malice is an attitude of ill will toward another person. If we have malice toward a person, we are sad when he is successful, and we rejoice when she has trouble. As [Ephesians 4:31](#) says, this too must be put to death in the life of a Christian.

4. Slander Then there's slander or blasphemy. Slander is malicious gossip, insulting or disparaging remarks about others. It can be directed towards God or towards other. If you have deep-seated ill will toward a person, you will use every opportunity to say something bad about him.

5. Filthy language refers to obscene and derogatory speech intended to hurt or wound someone.

It includes foul speech and coarse humor. Such talk is not to be part of a Christian's language—

Ephesians 5:4 says, “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.” Jesus warned in **Matthew 12:36**, “I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.”

6. Lying Paul warned against a final sin, lying, by urging believers not to “lie to each other.” A lie is any misrepresentation of the truth. Even if the words are accurate, the tone of voice, the look on the face, or a gesture of the hand can alter the meaning of a sentence. Satan is a liar; **John 8:44** says that he is “the father of lies”; while **John 14:17** says that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. When a believer lies, he is imitating Satan, not his heavenly Father. Of all people, Christians should tell the truth.

III. Conclusion

Paul is calling for radical surgery. He is saying that Christians are to put to death every part of our being which is against God, and which prevents us from doing God's will. But we must be careful that we don't get the cart before the horse. Our holiness does not come from our attempts to comply with an arbitrary list of does and don'ts. Our godliness is not measured by the things we do not do. It comes from being in Christ, dying with Christ, and be raised in Christ.

Living a life that is pleasing to God comes about when we put on Christ—when we, as **Ephesians 5:18** says, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled, i.e. be continually filled, with the Spirit.” When we are filled with the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, i.e. “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (**Galatians 5:22-23**) will grow. When we “do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but are transformed by the renewing of our minds” (**Romans 12:2**), only then, through the power of the Holy Spirit within us, can we make this transformation. Turn to **Philippians 2:12-13**. By setting their hearts on things above, putting to death the things on the earth, getting rid of past wicked practices and clothing themselves

with the new life will Christians be transformed. As we have seen before, this is a process that will last a lifetime.

Paul's insistence on putting off sin and putting on the new life with its related virtues runs against the culture of today. An attack on sexual sins, for example, is quickly dismissed as prudish, puritanical, or Victorian. Chastity is seen as outmoded. Living together, adultery are seen as the norm—"everyone is doing it." Our culture increasingly questions the clear distinctions between right and wrong and good and evil that were taken for granted by earlier generations and are found in God's Word. Many assume that as independent human beings we are each free to live by whatever standards we choose, and resent any challenges to lifestyle decisions. Many today believe that we should be left to ourselves to create our own morals from a smorgasbord of equally valid choices. But this is a lie from Satan. The Bible makes it clear that there are objective standards that Christians are to meet—not only here in the letter to the Colossians but elsewhere, e.g. [turn to Galatians 5:16-21—I'm reading from a paraphrase called the "Living Letters."](#)

[Romans 12:1](#) says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, i.e. because of all He has done for you, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship." The trouble with living sacrifices is that they are continually trying to get away. For this reason every Christian must continually look at his life and her thoughts—are they heavenly thoughts or are they thoughts from hell itself. [1 Peter 5:8-9](#) warns, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." Be self-controlled and alert. Resist the devil, standing firm in the faith. We are in a battle BUT "The Battle Belongs to the Lord." With God on our side, we cannot lose!!