

Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

WEEK 11

Putting Sin to Death



“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” (Col. 3:5-6).

Christian living is frustrating when we forget Scripture’s basic ethical imperative: “Be what you already are.” Our repeated sins lead us to conclude that we are fundamentally unholy, as opposed to righteous in Christ. This often leads us to think that we must simply work harder. Such moralism pushes true sanctification far away, and it breeds discouragement, apathy, and the lowering of God’s standards. To view holiness as entirely future highlights the gulf between where we are and where we want to be, making real spiritual progress seem impossible. Believing the principle that even those who are in Christ are not already in some sense holy, we may give up killing our sin — why bother if God is disgusted with us all the time? The downward spiral of sin and discouragement can make us redefine sin, calling evil “good” or prizing external righteousness to convince ourselves that we are growing in grace.

Of course, it is foolish to believe God ignores our thoughts and deeds. Sin’s presence remains until we are glorified, and we need to repent of our transgressions daily (1 John 1:8–10). We are not yet perfectly holy in practice, and passages like Colossians 3:5–8 that call us to put sin to death exist because disobedience is a reality for us. Still, the Bible defines Christians as already holy,

COLOSSIANS 3:5-11
CORAM DEO

Understanding that we are already holy in Christ should not be confused with the perfectionism that we often see in other theological traditions. We will not be free from the struggle with sin before we are glorified, but knowing that God sees us as holy in Jesus encourages us to live according to what we already are. It makes us realistic about the sin that remains in our hearts and more eager to purge it by the power of the Spirit.

“sanctified ... in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). In Christ we have made a decisive break with unholiness. Our Creator declares us holy in His Son — we are saints of God Most High, and He sees us as pure through Jesus’ blood (Col. 1:2; Heb. 9:13–14).

God’s message to Christians is not “you are not yet holy; work on it until you get there,” but “you are holy; be what you already are in Christ.” This viewpoint fosters confidence, passion, and a true understanding of sin. Knowing our Father sees us as holy in His Son, we are encouraged to make real, though fitful, spiritual progress. God by His grace declares us holy, so believers cannot fail utterly to make what we do line up with who He says we are. Understanding that we are holy citizens of a holy kingdom, we are eager to fulfill our civic duty to mortify sin. Finally, knowing that we are now saints reminds us of the gravity of evil. Sin is so horrendous and powerful that the only way we could ever be pure was for God to intervene and do the work needed to declare us holy. We underestimate sin at our own peril.

OPEN IT



1. What was or is your favorite outfit or piece of clothing? What makes it so special?

2. When you’re finished with your old clothes, what do you often do with them?

READ IT | Colossians 3:5-11

EXPLORE IT



3. What evil activities does God seek to eliminate from our lives? (3:5)

4. Who had been guilty of such living? (3:7)

5. What had the Colossians taken off? (3:7-9)

6. What had the Colossians put on? (3:10)

7. What distinctions are removed in Christ? (3:11)

GET IT

We think that once we become Christians, it'll all just come together eventually for us, and we'll just suddenly arrive at Christ-likeness. Well, that isn't totally accurate. You see, there are things that we must do. We must apply ourselves. We must apply the Word of God. We must exert ourselves. And we must exercise our will. In order to put to death the flesh – The Flesh dies a slow death. In short the way that you put to death the flesh is

to starve it. The way to be transformed is to **feed the Spirit**. You make the choice to **starve the flesh** – Feed the Spirit and God does that work of transformation in your life. It is really that simple.¹

8. Why do you think Paul speaks so bluntly about our need to deal with sin?

9. How does one go about “starving the flesh” and “feeding the Spirit”?

When one hears the word “immorality” it many times falls on deaf ears. At times like this it is good to speak bluntly because we have become altogether lax in our understanding of such words in scripture. **Immorality means no sexual wrongdoing**; no pre-marital sex or “friends with benefits” (fornication); no extra-marital sex – that is no messing around with someone else's wife or being faithless to your own spouse; no homosexual sex – which, contrary to popular opinion, is sin; no pornography whether in print, on your TV, or through the internet; no fantasy novels or books or magazines that are full of innuendo and sexually descriptive situations and ideas which have one intention – to get yourself turned on – that is sexual fantasy and that is wrong, too, as Jesus pointed out. **So to "flee immorality" means to have none of these things going on in your life.**

10. Paul begins by giving believers a list of sins that we must “put to death.” The first four Paul speaks of have to do with sexual sin. Why do you think Paul attacks this area of temptation first?

What does this tell us about sin and the tendencies of humanity no matter the generation?

Christian speech must be kind. All slanderous and malicious talking is forbidden. The old advice still stands which says that before we repeat anything about anyone we should ask three questions: **"Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?"** The New Testament is unsparing in its condemnation of the gossiping tongues which

¹ <http://media.calvaryvista.com/salvato-rob/studies-books/51-COL-2004/00000000.htm>

poison truth. It is no wonder the psalmist prayed Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. (Ps 141:3) David understood the basic principle of which James [James 3:8] wrote years later "no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison." Thus David boldly requests of God for His assistance to place a sentinel on duty to watch his words. Oh, how we all [I speak especially of believers for nothing can spoil our witness as quick as words of wrath] need to pray this prayer, for our old flesh is quick to speak, slow to listen and slow to hear.²

11. In verses 8-9 Paul continues his warning by focusing on how we use our words. What examples does he give?

What dangers do these produce in our lives?

How can we strip away these areas from our lives?

"Put them away" is in the **aoist imperative** which calls for a decisive choice to effectively accomplish an action and conveys the idea of doing so with some degree of urgency. The idea is **"Do this now!"** Put these habits of the old life away. Lay them aside like you would **filthy, smelly, dirty clothes**. You have the power of the Spirit of Christ to put to death the deeds of the flesh. Practically speaking, you will encounter many situations in which you have the choice to "put aside" the "dirty clothes" or to choose not to do so. Every time you make the choice to put the filthy rags off, you are growing in conformity to Jesus. This is what Paul is saying in Romans 6, exhorting believers to **"present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification."**

Paul says "walk away from these things." You may be in the situation where you feel you've repeated a sin so often that you feel you cannot get free from it. Not only **can** you get free of it, but you had better slam the door on that situation or it will ruin your usefulness for the Lord and affect your reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

When you put all these things aside, you put away not only the activity of them, but the things that contribute to those things. Put them away! You're a "living dead" man and now you've got the power in Christ to carry out these otherwise impossible commands.³

² http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_36-11.htm#3:6

³ http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_36-11.htm

12. *[Personal] Which expressions of the “earthly nature” listed in Colossians 3:5-9 do you struggle with the most?*

[Personal] How can you work toward putting these to death?

13. *How does knowing that God’s wrath is coming on account of such sins compel you to do something drastic about the dirty clothing we all wear?*

Renewed (Greek=anakainoo) means literally to make new (in quality) again. It is to cause something to become new and better or superior. In the present context Paul uses this word to signify that the believer is to continually be changed into a new quality or kind of life (that heretofore never existed), which is in opposition to the corrupt, depraved state of the unregenerate man or woman, a state which is continually "decaying" (in a spiritual sense).

The present tense indicates that we are "constantly being renewed" to a new quality of life, which describes a process that will continue the rest of our earthly lives and is essentially synonymous with sanctification, growth in holiness, gradually being conformed to the image of God's Son, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.⁴

14. *How would you explain to someone your new identity and destiny as a Christian?*

15. *What role do we play in this process of being renewed? What types of activities or disciplines can help us in this process?*

⁴ http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_310.htm#3:10

16. *What advice would you give to a fellow believer who tells you that their spiritual life seems “stuck” or “stagnant?”*

In verse 11 Paul tears down social walls:

- *National privilege = “Greek or Jew”*
- *Legal or ceremonial standing = “circumcised or uncircumcised”*
- *Culture = “barbarian and Scythian”*
- *Social caste = “slave or free.”⁵*

17. *Based on Colossians 3:11, what difference does our relationship with Christ make in how we relate to people from a variety of backgrounds?*

How should this affect our attitude toward others who are very different than ourselves?

18. *Take time to pray about those things that you need God’s strength to “put off.” Be honest and confess those things, receive His promised forgiveness and commit to make the needed changes so you might be victorious.*

Don’t forget to pray for your fellow group members as they “put off” the sins that are entangling them as well.

⁵ <http://gracemahomet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Colossians-Small-Groups.pdf>