



“Put Them to Death”

Colossians 3:5-8

March 13, 2022

We are in Colossians Chapter 3 once again. As we prepare our hearts for what the Lord has for us in this passage of Scripture, let me remind you once again that we have a major holiday that is just five weeks away. It will be Easter Sunday and we will celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is going to be a weekend that takes us to the very heart of the Christian faith. We will recognize and celebrate the fact that the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, assumed humanity to Himself; that He came into the world that He created.

We will recognize and celebrate the fact that Jesus lived a perfect life of purity and holiness and love. On that Good Friday, we will reflect upon the glorious reality that the very Son of God was nailed to a Roman cross, where He made atoning sacrifice for the sins of His people.

Even as the Son of God died on the cross and as He was placed in the tomb, death could not keep its hold on Him and on the third day, Christ Jesus arose victoriously from the grave over death and we will celebrate that historical reality of the resurrection of the King,

But guess what? While the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very focal point of human history, there is more to the glorious doctrine of the resurrection. There is more to the story, because everyone who is in Christ is risen with Him. If you have heard the call of the Messiah, and if you have come to Him in faith for the forgiveness of sin, you have been joined permanently to the life of God in Christ.

The time is coming when Jesus returns to this earth and His church is going to be brought into His resurrection and given permanent, powerful bodies that are tangible and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit in which they will dwell in the new heavens and the new earth forevermore. We are brought into the resurrection of Jesus too. Even now, we are joined to Him in faith with everlasting life.

But here is something that we as the church are going to grapple with as we await the day of His glorious return. Even having come to faith in Jesus Christ, and even having the forgiveness of sin, and even being a part of His Kingdom, and even being transferred from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of Light, and even being brought into the reign of the Messiah, as a follower of Christ we are still going to be dealing with the reality of the lingering effects of sin inside of us.

We will still be capable of sinning. There will be times in our lives where we feel surges and desires that are still present and the Word of God calls us to do something with such sinful practices and desires.

Do you want to know what God calls us to do and will empower us to do by the Holy Spirit? Take a wild guess. Put them to death! The language of Scripture is violent—pulverize them! In a life joined with Christ that is otherwise to be characterized by growing and increasing love, there is an area of hostility that the Holy Spirit is going to put in us, and that is hostility toward our own sin, and we are to kill it.

But don't just take my word for it. Let's see this laid before us in the pages of Sacred Scripture, which is authoritative and which comes to us from the heart of God for our good. Let's look at Colossians Chapter 3. Our focus will be on Verses 5 through 8 this morning, but we are going to read the whole surrounding context beginning in Verse 1.

Let's see what is here for us:

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death therefore what is earthy in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

What a bold, assertive, powerful, and very, very relevant portion of Scripture that comes to us this morning from the book of Colossians.

From this text that we just read, I want to talk to you about our need to practice capital punishment. Notice the language I just used, "You in Christ by the Spirit of God, are called to practice capital punishment."

Right now, I am not talking about supporting at the societal level the death penalty, although I think that there is a biblical case that can be made for that in the case of a clear conviction where somebody has committed a heinous murder against somebody else. That is not what I am talking about right now.

I am talking about our need to practice the death penalty of capital punishment, for us to be the executionary. Have you ever thought of yourself in that way? I don't think about myself in that way very often.

But in this text there comes a clear calling from Scripture that we are to kill the manifestations of sin in our own lives. It is laid out for us very, very clearly in passage of Scripture we are focusing on.

⁵Put to death therefore what is earthy in you

Then in the paragraph that we are focused on this morning, there are two lists of sins to be put to death. In Verse 5, there is a list of sexual iniquities and then in Verse 8, there is a second list of relational vices.

The language that is here in this text for us as far as our attitude and practice of these things goes, it is violent. Sometimes the Scriptures uses violent language, especially in the case of a believer's attitude toward his lingering sin. We are to strangle it. We are to pulverize it. We are to kill it.

We are to put it to death in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not called to suppress it. We are not called to try and control it. We are called to kill it. This is given to us with a great sense of urgency.

We need to do this because sin still lingers in the old self and it is an egregious offender. It deserves to die because of the damage that it does. So we are to put to death sin and all of the different desires for sin and practices of it in the power of the Holy Spirit, who raises us, who regenerates us, and who helps us to love what we need to love and to hate what we need to hate.

So let's take a good close look at what is here in this text. Let's take a closer look at these two lists, and let's agree with God that they must be killed. Let's pray for the Spirit's work in our hearts and then go and obey in the power of the One who can empower it in us.

As those who are alive in Christ, first:

1. Let's put sexual sin to death (3:5-6)

In Verse 5, there is a catalog of five sins and each one with the possible exception of the last, has to do with the sinful misuse of sex. So let's read what is here once again.

⁵Put to death therefore what is earthy in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

As we consider this urgent command for the followers of Jesus to put sexual sin to death, let me start by prefacing it with something. The Bible is pro-sex. The Bible advocates for sexual intimacy. The Bible does not view sexual intimacy as "icky." The Bible views sexual intimacy as a gift given for the human race to be practiced in a certain context.

God has given this. God designed it. He made it. It is not pleasurable by accident. It is from God. Most of the book of the Song of Solomon is written about this very thing; this bliss that is to occur among married couples in their sexual union.

We read in Genesis Chapter 2 and Verse 24, there at the beginning of the world:

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Sexual intimacy is the bond by which God seals the covenant of marriage which occurs biblically. This is what marriage is—a permanent, lifelong union between one man and one woman—a husband and a wife. God has designed their bodies to correspond to one another anatomically.

That sexual union is in fact the seal of the marriage covenant. There is a bond that is attached to it. Sexual intimacy is not common, it is profound. It is not vulgar, it is sacred. But taken out of that context, it is a misuse and an abuse of what God has given. When God's instruction for sexual intimacy is disregarded, it opens up a whole world of trouble at the personal level, at the individual level, and at the societal level.

Brothers and sisters, praise God, we are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. But sin still lingers within us. We are still capable of desiring and practicing sexual immorality, and the Holy Spirit is going to give us an animosity to the sin within us, so that we can live according to the standards that God has given for the good of the human race.

So we see what is here for us in this text:

⁵Put to death therefore what is earthy in you: sexual immorality

That's the first thing that comes. Sexual immorality is a translation the Greek word, porneia, from which we get pornography from. It is the most general word for illicit sexual activity. Sexual immorality is any kind of union activity or thought that is engaged in that is outside of the marriage union, whether sex that is prior to marriage, which is called fornication; whether it is sex that is outside of the bond of marriage, which is called adultery. These things are sin and the Holy Spirit is calling us to put these things to death.

So if you are at work and notice one of your coworkers glancing your direction and it is a glance that is prolonged, and you discern there is meaning to that gaze and it is affecting you, tempting you to go in a way that is unfaithful to the spouse that you have been given, the calling that is upon your life is to put any desire to death that would lead you in the way of sin.

You can pray that the Lord would fill your heart with such love for your spouse and such hatred for anything that would break that covenant that you would be able to strangle that sin do death, even the desire for it.

Gazing upon a screen where people are involved in sexual activity is pornography, and it is a very widely accepted form of voyeurism. If you have this desire in you and you feel a pull to pornography, you pray, “God, pulverize it inside of me, so that the toxic effect of it won’t enter into me, and help me to love.”

Pray that the Lord will help you to love the very people that you would otherwise be watching on that screen who are being demeaned by what is happening. Pray that God will give you love for what He has given sex for, so that you will be empowered by the Spirit of Jesus to walk in purity and put sexual sin to death.

Verse 5 says, “Put to death therefore what is earthy in you—sexual immorality—then it says impurity. Now we are talking about uncleanness of thought, word, or act. Pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will be given victory, so that you will pulverize any tendency within you to decorate the gift of sexual intimacy with foul humor, vulgar language, demeaning and disrespectful thoughts, or jokes.

Pray that any such thing will be squashed out of your life, and that you will not practice such things, because you are dead to them and you want to put those things to death. This kind of speech and language is not consistent with the kingdom of purity and light that you have been raised up into as a follower of Jesus Christ, so any such practice is to be slaughtered.

Verse 5 also refers to passion and it refers to strong, lustful desire. Pray that God will empower you and you will obey what He is empowering in you. This desire that begins in the thought life, fantasizing about people that you are not in a covenant of marriage with.

By the way, if you are in a covenant of marriage, think about your spouse. Dream about your spouse. Look forward to the time with your spouse—the loving union God gives you with them, but with no one else! Pulverize such thoughts in the power of the Holy Spirit, because this is in keeping with the new life that you have been given in Christ.

Covetousness is the desire to have more and more and more and more and in particular, it is the desire to possess what does not belong to you. What is interesting is that the Tenth Commandment which deals with the issue of covetousness, it defines it very broadly in terms of both material items and, evidently, possibly, sexual experiences for it says in Exodus 20 and Verse 17:

¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

So there can be covetousness, the desire to have, have, have what is not ours even in the sexual realm.

Paul used a word to describe this. It is the word idolatry. He used that word to capture the essence of all of this covetousness, the burning desire for things that are not ours. So, idolatry is the worship of false gods. Idolatry has many different species. One of the species of idolatry is

loving and yearning for created things above the Creator. This is one of the things that Paul listed here as that which must be put to death.

Then as Paul continued on in this portion of Scripture, he gave us a very compelling reason why the Christian is to put all of these things that had just been listed to death. We see it laid out for us in Verse 6:

‘On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

This is already a tense topic and now we have this! The wrath of God is coming!

This is not a popular topic in the world today. Sadly, it seems to be a topic that is avoided in many churches as well. Yet, it is thoroughly biblical. God has revealed this aspect of His character in the pages of the Bible from beginning to end. God has righteous indignation toward sin and He will bring judgment upon it. That is why we are given warning from Genesis to Revelation about the coming wrath of God.

In my earlier years, we used to go camping a lot at the beach campgrounds of Northern San Diego County. I spent a lot of time at San Onofre, and Cardiff, and at Carlsbad, these great beaches. There is a train track that goes right along the coast. You would hear the trains passing by all through the day, and even through the night.

Especially all through the day as the trains were approaching, you hear blaring horns from the train. They are so loud. The horns are blaring to warn people that the train is coming, you don’t want to be on the tracks when the train arrives. Likewise, all throughout the pages of Scripture, we are told that the wrath of God is coming. Judgement upon sin and rebellion is going to be manifested powerfully upon this earth.

Let’s not confuse the wrath of God with the wrath of man. When we talk about the wrath of God, we need to rid ourselves of any notion of an imperfect person with a foul temper who flies off the handle at every aggregation. The wrath of man, with all of its impurities is condemned in Verse 7.

Rather, the wrath of God is His settled, determined, measured, intense, opposition, and anger toward, and judgment of all that is sinful. God is holy, holy, holy, and He sees the abusiveness of all sin to a much greater degree than we do. And the time of judgment is coming. All sin will be judged. The wrath of God is coming. This is a biblical reality. The train is coming.

The follower of Jesus Christ can rejoice that the wrath of God has been poured out. There has already been an outpouring of redemptive wrath. Out of His great mercy and love, Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross, where He took the wrath of God for His people. This is what it means that Jesus is Savior.

The need for salvation implies peril and Jesus saves us from the penalty of our sin. Praise God for Jesus and what He has done for us. The wrath of God came at the cross for those who are in Christ. The wrath of God is coming again for those who reject Christ and live in rebellion. As

followers of Jesus Christ, we don't want to have anything to do with that which stirs the righteous indignation of the Living God.

Instead, we want to be humbled in the fear of the Lord. We want to have a growing love for what Jesus did to save us and to deliver us, calling those around us into this same salvation that occurs only in Christ. And we don't want to be a part of anything that led to Jesus being nailed to the cross, so we repent by the power of the Spirit who lives in us.

With taking all of this into account, brothers and sisters, understand that righteousness indignation in the child of God is an aspect of our growth in holiness. We ought to have a sense of righteousness indignation for our sin. Our sin!

We need to be praying, "Lord, if I were to live out the sinful desires that I have, it would do such damage to Your Kingdom and to the people in my life. Help me to rebel against my sin, and to want to strangle it. Lord, help me to want to pulverize it. Help me to kill it dead and after that, to kill it dead again."

This is the kind of holy zeal that the Lord, the Spirit is talking about in this passage of Scripture, when it says, "Put these things to death." This is a very important aspect of the work of God in His church. Let me repeat: In a life otherwise characterized by mercy and love and affection, we are to have a holy hatred for our own sin, leading to us, by the power of God, to kill it.

This not only has to do with sexual sin, but it also has to do with relational sin too. Relational sin that does not involve the practice of sexual issues. We continue and we see that there are other relational sins that we are called to:

2. Let's put relational sin away (3:7-8)

As those alive in Christ, as those who are raised up in Him, joined to the Living Head, Jesus, let's put relational sin away.

⁷In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Put them away!

The nuance of this is a carryover from what we read in the previous two verses. This is not like stripping off these qualities and folding them up nicely and putting them in a storage bin, where they might be available for future use. No, we are talking about aggressively pulling these qualities off. Put them off, it says.

Imagine if you were standing by a campfire on a cool night. There was a big fire going, and you were standing there keeping your back warmed up. All of sudden it was really, really hot behind you, and everyone was yelling that your coat was on fire. What are you going to do with that coat? You would tear that coat off and stomp it on the ground.

That is what this verse is talking about when it says to put these things away. Notice the word *must*. You must put these things away, because such a life of hostility is not the life that Christ is raising us to.

So we have this list of relational vices. First, we must put away anger. Anger is a general term to speak of the strong sense of displeasure and hostility that rises up in us. Here, it is talking about hostility toward people first and foremost.

I know that we get angry when we stub our big toe on things. But this verse is talking about anger toward people. This is a relational context toward people. We must be filled with the power of the Spirit to put these things to death.

With anger being the general term, there are four ways that anger can come out of us. First there is wrath. Now the anger has become visible. It is an outburst. You can see it. So that which was within is now being lashed out in the form of yelling, striking, punching, kicking; sometimes kicking cabinets or pounding steering wheels.

Do you want to know where I got those two examples? I'm not going to tell you because from your laughter, I know you already know and that proves the point that I opened up with that even as a follower of Jesus Christ, I get these passions that surge within me. Do you want to know when I am at my worst?

I have told you before, it is when we are going on vacation. I get this picture of how everything is going to work. It is going to be a nice and orderly packing of the van, and we are going to be off on our voyage early enough to miss all of the traffic. Going on vacation when everything that can go wrong, does go wrong, and I get like Yosemite Sam and blow my stack!

It can rise up and the Holy Spirit is saying, "Jeff, and everybody else who relates to this, put that to death. That is not how you are to conduct yourself." You are a citizen of the Kingdom and the Holy Spirit is going to empower you to put that off. Obey the Holy Spirit.

It is not that you will have the power in yourself to do it, but there is the Spirit of the Living God who comes into your life to help you to wipe out those fits of rage and those temper tantrums and those hissy fits, so even when you are driving on the road, you can in the Holy Spirit say, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord," when somebody cuts you off, rather than exploding with a series of expletives. You can do that and you are called to do that, so get it into your head.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind and be renewed in the knowledge of your Maker, Jesus. You can do this. So when you get angry, what is the Holy Spirit going to empower you to do? Not to kill the person you are mad at, but to kill the anger inside of you. Call it to mind, and say, "Lord, fill me with power to love even those that I find totally odious and obnoxious as this moment." Wrath is one form of anger as it gets manifested in our lives.

Then what comes next? Malice! If wrath is super external, malice smolders. It is a smoldering attitude of disgust toward people. It is like a slow cooker filled with resolute bitterness. It can

be directed toward people you don't like and it can directed to entire people groups you don't like.

At the end of the text that we read this morning, Paul was talking about Jews, and Greeks, and barbarians, and Scythians—a whole bunch of people that prior to Christ did not like each other, to put it mildly. In Christ, the Holy Spirit is going to help you to unplug that crock pot and put this to death.

Next we see slander. Slander is evil communication. It is anger and malice coming out of your speech, coming from your pen, coming from your keyboard. You are in a conflict, you are angry, you don't like how you were treated, so you are going to communicate to other people about the person that you are upset and angry at.

You are then going to eliminate any positive quality at work in that person's life. Then you are going to totally maximize and exaggerate their faults. You have made up your mind about them. You don't like them. You don't want other people to like them, so you defame their character. This is to be put off. What is the imagery that we have here? This kind of slander is a coat you are wearing that is burning up, and what are you supposed to do with it?

Take it off and stamp it out, and say, "No, Lord, I'm going to follow you in another direction. You gave me the capacity of communication, not to lie about the people that I am upset with. Instead, I'm going to walk the path of peace. I'm going to leave vengeance to You, and I am going to seek to do good to those who have harmed against me." Read Romans 12 and Verses 17 through 21, for what I just laid out right there.

"Neither let any obscene talk come out of your mouth." Cussing, profanity, filthy jokes about people. God did not give you your capacity for communication for that either. This is not what God created speech for, so by the power of the Holy Spirit, this is the kind of speech that we are going to cast off and not be participants with.

Looking back, Paul said

⁵Put to death therefore what is earthy in you

That which dominates. Behavior patterns that we see on earth. It might be said that these two lists very much describe American society. But they do not describe Heaven. Put to death whatever is earthy in you! Notice that Paul said, "In you." In you. In you!

Very clearly these things are happening everywhere. They are being manifested everywhere, but this is also happening in you. Christians still feel these surges and sometimes, if we are being honest, we practice what those surges lead us to.

So instead of having all of this attention on what is happening out there, let's focus in on what is happening in us and let's go before the Lord with our own sense of need and contrition. Pray that He will give you a vision of Christ on the throne and of the Kingdom that King Christ rules over.

Pray that He will give you such love for that Kingdom that He rules and reigns over and its ways, that there will be an increasing animosity toward anything in you that would lead you in a way that is other than that.

Pray the Lord will give you hostility against your own sin while also filling you with love for the Lord, love for His Word, love for your church, love for your neighborhood, love for the people around you, that you might kill sin in you by the power of the Spirit, so that you can represent the Kingdom of God that you have been born into.

What does the word moxy mean? That word comes to mind. Rebel against your sin. Don't let it reign in you. Put it to death; that the way of love might rise up. Jesus reigns over the New Jerusalem. Jesus reigns over this great city that is called The City of Peace, and Jesus is the Prince of Peace and He is going to lead you in the way of Shalom. Be filled with the Spirit of Jesus.

Here is something that is very interesting about this New Heaven, this New Earth with the capitol city of the New Jerusalem. The entry into this Kingdom is not proving to God how good and worthy you are of it. You are not good. You are fallen in sin and you cannot qualify yourself by your deeds of righteousness.

Rather, the way that you find entrance into this Kingdom is to acknowledge before God that you are not worthy of it and that you need grace and mercy and forgiveness. We read in I John Chapter 1 and Verses 8 and 9:

⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus washes away the sins of the contrite who come to Him in faith. Not only does Jesus save you from the penalty of sin as you come to Him, drawn in by God's gracious working in your heart, but He is going give you salvation over its power. He is going to help you to live in a new way.

So let's follow Him in how He is leading us, looking forward to the weeks ahead where we will get into what we put on—this life of love that is so beautifully defined for us here in the rest of Colossians. Read ahead. For now:

Summary Steps:

1. Be resolved in the hatred of your own sin.
2. Be renewed in an increasing knowledge of Jesus Christ, the One that your life is patterned after. That is coming next week.

3. Be delivered from desire by desire. From fallen passions by a new passion to live in the pattern of Jesus Christ.

Pray that the Spirit will produce these things in you.

Let's close in a world of prayer.