

Colossians Chapter 3

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[0 : 00] If you could turn with me now, please, to Colossians chapter 3, the passage that we read. And we'll look, I think, today at verses 5 through to verse 11 of the chapter.

So you can have a finger in that as we go through this. One question that's been on my mind as we've stood at the door, mainly, over the last two or three months, has been, how do you kill a clan of wasps?

I wasn't quite sure what you call a collective thing of wasps. Is it a nest of wasps or a swarm of wasps? But it seems like every time I'm standing at that door and I have a phobia, I have a desperate fear of wasps.

And it seems like every time I'm going to shake somebody's hand, one of these wasps is trying to get in my ear or down the back of my shirt or up my trouser leg. There's wasps buzzing around every cake in this church and every cup of coffee.

I'm hoping that the snow has sent them packing. But my question has been a ruthless one and it's been, how do you kill them off? There's gardeners amongst us here as well.

[1 : 19] And you might have similar questions about weeds. You're working away in your garden. You're trying hard to nurture these plants.

And there's these weeds that grow up. They need no encouragement. They strangle the flowers. They take over the soil. And every gardener I've ever met just wants to kill them.

To eliminate them. Or the medics amongst us. Another example. When you encounter a bacterial infection in somebody who comes to you for help.

When you see or hear of malignant cells in a body. You don't say to the patient, well let's just leave them to develop and grow.

You want to kill them. You want to kill them. Isolate them and kill them. And do so as soon as possible. Now Paul in this section of Colossians chapter 3.

[2 : 19] He begins this section on a note of violence. And he's not talking about wasps or weeds or medical issues. He's talking about sin in the believer's life.

And the instruction. The instruction. The exhortation that the apostle Paul gives as God directs him. It's clear and it's strong.

He says kill it. Put it to death. When you see sin. In your heart. In your life.

Then we are called. We are instructed. We are commanded to kill it. To be ruthless. To be intolerant.

To kill it. Put it to death. Jesus said the same thing. In the gospels. It's Matthew chapter 5. He says in verse 29.

[3 : 21] If your right eye causes you to sin. Gouge it out. And throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body. Than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin. Cut it off. And throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body. Than for your whole body.

To go into hell. These are serious words. There is an absolute intolerance of sin. On the part of Christ.

And on the part of Christ's people. This is what we are taught. Remember the stones. The rolling stones. The song that they sang. I don't know was it the 60s or the 70s. But the chorus in the song was.

Don't play with me. Because you're playing with fire. Well that's the message. Throughout scripture. Concerning sin. We could go to the Old Testament.

[4 : 19] In fact in a measure. In the Old Testament. In Joshua. We have seen this. We can go to the apostles. We can go to the apostolic letters.

We can go to the gospels. We see throughout scripture. The same note. The same message is clear. We're not to play with sin. We're not to entertain sin. We're not to harbour sin. We're not to give it any space. To breathe and grow within us. Because the stakes are too high. And the risks are too grave. So we're called to kill it. To put it to death. And in the verses that follow here. From verse 5 to verse 11.

We're directed on how with God's help. We can do that. And this is something. In the Christian's life. It's an ongoing thing.

[5 : 15] When we become Christians. When we give our lives to Christ. The punishment for our sin is paid. The price for our sin is paid. But we're saved from that penalty.

But we're not saved from the presence of sin. That doesn't happen to heaven. So we're in a war. We're in a battle. It's around us. And it's inside us. And there's times that we feel. That we're making progress. There's times that we feel like sin is strangling us. We're going backwards. So what do we do? How do we seek to obey this command. And put sin to death in our life? Well there's four points here. That I want to go through in the time that we have. It's only five to eight. According to the clock. So you're in great danger this morning.

[6 : 14] Four points. The first point that we have here. Is we are to name our sin. Name our sin. Put to death verse five. Therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality. Impurity. Lust. Evil. Desire. Sin. Greed. Which is idolatry. And the word that's used here. Which kind of gives us a sense of this in the English. The word that's used in the Greek for sexual immorality. Is the word pornea. From which we get the English word pornography. And then the words that follow here. Are all equally difficult to sort of take on. Impurity. Lust. Evil desires. Greed. They're all the knock on sins. That follow on from the original.

[7 : 13] Word that's used there for sexual immorality. But the list in verse five. I think we can agree. It's an unsavory list. We don't like to read this. And then if we skip on just a wee bit to verse eight. We read in verse eight. There of another list of sins. We read of anger and rage and malice and slander and filthy language. And again these are ugly words. Which is not a nice palatable picture that Paul is painting. These are ugly sins that Paul is highlighting and he's pressing upon us. And note Paul is writing this letter. And this is a letter that's not to be sent out to the world. This is a letter that is addressed firmly to the church. This is a letter that addresses the issues that were within the church in Colossae. And that might shock us. But it should also encourage us.

[8 : 17] If you know your heart. And I know mine. Because there will be some people in this room this morning. And in every gathering of the Lord's people across the world. And these are the specific struggles. That are in their lives and ours. So what do we do. If as we read through these lists. We see some of the exact sins that are dominating and damaging us. On the page before us. What do we do? We don't hide them. We don't embody them. We don't pretend before the Lord that they don't exist. Because he sees our hearts anyway. We name them. Before the Lord. Just as the Lord named them before the church.

[9 : 29] Through the apostle Paul. I was watching a film last week. And one of the scenes in the film. There's a group of alcoholics. And they're huddled together in this wee room somewhere in America. And in wanders this man. And he's kind of disheveled. And he sits in a chair in this little circle. And everyone looks at him. And the leader of the A group says to him. You got something to say? And he shifts in this chair uncomfortable. And he says, yeah, yeah. It's nice to be here. Thanks for having me here. And thanks for making me so welcome. And there's an uncomfortable silence. And everybody in that wee huddle continues to look at the man. And continues to listen to the man. And there's a long, uncomfortable pause.

[10:28] And then the man breaks down. And he says, my name's Jackson. And I'm an alcoholic. He names the problem. And once he names the problem. We begin to make progress. And a big part of overcoming the problem in many areas.

Paul names the problem. Is naming the problem. And Paul names these sins which were in the church.

And you and I. We need to name our sins. That's what it means to confess our sin.

We name them before the Lord. And not in broad generic terms. But as we come before God in prayer.

[11:28] In the privacy of our closet. We name our specific sins. We name our pet sins. The ones that we love and hate at the same time.

We name our besetting sins. That we think we've moved on from. And then we're back into again. And we agree with God. Unreservedly.

That we are guilty before him. We agree with God. That in his strength. We will turn. Away from them. And if we do that.

1 John 1.8 and 9. Comes into play. Says there. If we claim to be without sin. We deceive ourselves. The truth is not in us. Now we pick up a chapter like this. And we read through some of these words. Or if we pick up the 10 commandments. And we look through the charges.

[12:34] And we say well that's nothing to do with me. Then this is not a promise for us. If we claim to be without sin.

We deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins. He is faithful and just. And will forgive us our sins.

And purify us from all unrighteousness. All unrighteousness. There's no charge.

There's no sin. There's no memory. There's no struggle. That's so heinous. That God says well. That's beyond the pale. There's no one who can sit here.

Or anywhere. And say well I'm past it. Because the promise is that if we confess our sins truly. If we name our sins before the Lord.

[13:35] And in his strength. And in his strength. Seek to turn from them. He will forgive us. He will purify us.

Not from some. But from all unrighteousness. Unrighteousness. So. As the spirit of God searches. Our lives this morning.

Will we not come before the Lord. And name our sins. And confess our sins.

And receive forgiveness. Of sin. That's what's offered. In the gospel. Some might say.

Is it really that easy? I bow my head. I see a few silent words. In my heart. And the whole.

[14:43] Of the back catalogue. Of my sin. Is white. Is it really that easy? You know. It seems very quick.

Cheap. That's what we believe. If we think that. For our sins to dissolve.

It's just. A few. Thoughtless words. And then we just carry on. As before. That's what we believe. And we don't see the gravity.

Of our sin. We won't take it seriously. We're back to it in a flash. So. The second point. That we want to consider. This morning. Is that. We need to know.

The gravity of our sin. To the first point. In seeking to kill sin. As we name it. We don't hide it. We name it.

[15:40] Before God. We name it. The second thing is. We need to. To know the gravity. Of our sin. So we're not just naming. Thoughtlessly. And lightly.

And then just going straight back to. Verse 6. Because of these. The wrath. Of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways.

In the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves. Of all such things. As these. Anger. Rage. Malice. Slander. And filthy language.

From your lips. So how can we know the gravity of our sin? Where is it that we can go.

To learn. The seriousness. Of sin. Because this is something that's hard for us. To actually grasp today. Going back in time. It wouldn't take too much convincing.

[16:36] For people to. To sort of grasp the fact. That sin is serious. And it's deadly. And it's to be turned away from. But. Today's a different world. It's a different culture.

If we go to the television. And we watch the television. Sin is a joke. Very rarely will we hear about sin. And if we do hear about sin. It's usually a comedian. That's standing up.

And. Is using sin as a subject. To make the masses laugh. You go to the newspapers. Remember reading an article recently. I can't quite remember.

Where I read it. But. Sin was presented. As a kind of. A delicious indulgence. Something that adults. Could just kind of. Revel in.

And have a bit of fun with. But there was certainly. Nothing toxic about sin. As far as the journalist. Who wrote. Was. Was saying. If we look at our sin.

[17:31] In comparison. To other people. We. We tend to trivialize it. Because we can always. Find someone. Who seems to be worse than us.

So we say. Well. You know. I know. I shouldn't spend as much. Money on new clothes. Or gadgets. But. I'm not. At least I'm not spending as much. As she is across the road. Or up the hill.

Or at least. I'm. I'm spending money. On clothes. And gadgets. And I'm not spending money. On drugs. There's worse than me. We. When we take our sin.

And we hold it up. Against other people. We. We trivialize it. We. We tend to go away. Feeling not quite so bad. About our sin. So. So where do we go. To get a grasp.

Of the gravity. Of our sin. We go to the cross. Because that's where we see.

[18:30] The wrath. Of God. Come. Upon. Jesus. Verse 6. Because. Of these sins. The previous ones. And the ones.

Paul is coming to. Because of these. The wrath. Of God. Is coming. And we see the wrath. Of God. Coming.

Upon Christ. On the cross. One of the commentators. Hendrickson. He says this. These sins. Attract. God's.

Displeasure. Like a magnet. Attracts. Iron. Or a high steeple. On an isolated hill. Draws. Lightning. And that last image.

Just really. Stayed with me. A high steeple. On an isolated hill. It attracts lightning. It attracts lightning. And as we go to the isolated hill of Calvary.

[19:29] We see that lightning strike. Of God's displeasure. His wrath. And it strikes Jesus. Precisely. And violently.

And intensely. Now why does it strike Jesus. It strikes Jesus. Because he was our substitute. He went to that hill. In our place. He went there to take. Our sins. Upon himself. He went there. If we want to be precise.

For our sexual immorality. And our impurity. And our lust. And our evil desires.

And our greed. And our idolatry. And our anger. And our rage. And our malice. And our slander. And our filthy language. Jesus went there.

[20:28] And the wrath of God. Which is attracted to. Our sin. Struck Christ.

As he took it. Upon himself. And he suffered. And he died.

To take the punishment. For my sin. And yours. If you're trusting it. So if we ever. Think.

That forgiveness. Is cheap. If we ever. Think. That our sin. Is not a big deal.

But it's a delicious. Indulgence. We need to go back. To the cross. And take another look.

[21:24] And when you and I. Feel. The building. Pressure. Of temptation. In the area. Of lust. Or slander.

Or gossip. Or temper. Or whatever. Before we act. Before we speak.

We need to go. We need to go. To the cross. And see the seriousness. And the ugliness.

Of what sin. Did. To Jesus. Some people. They have a special place. You know. And you see them there often.

And. They go there. And once they're there. Whether it's a beach. Or a hill. Or whatever. It's like.

Once they get up. To the top of this hill. Once they're walking along. This beach.

[22:19] They. They can see. And think clearly. So they keep going back there. And it's what gives them. Proper. Perspective.

The cross is the place. That you and I. Need to keep on going. Because this is the place. That we see. The gravity. Of our sin. And the extravagance.

Of God's grace. Spurgeon said. I wish. That our ministry. And mine especially. Might be tied. And tethered.

To the cross. And it was. That's why it was so blessed. That we should wish. That our lives. Would be tied.

And tethered. To the cross. So how do we kill sin? We name it. We don't hide it. We name it. Before God. The second point.

[23 : 20] Is we. We. We need to know. The gravity. Of our sin. The third thing. We need to know. Is. We need to know. Fellowship. With each other.

In this battle. Against sin. If we think back. To the. To the AA. The Alcoholics. Anonymous. Example. Because the alcoholics.

In these meetings. Are honest. About having. A problem. The same problem. Because they. They all seek. The same solution. They. They're looking for. This sobriety.

There's a kinship there. And you can see that. In the film. And. Understand. That's something that's. It's seen in AA groups. All over the land. There's a kinship there. There's a closeness. Because. They're honest with each other. About their problem. And they're. Seeking the same solution. Now. In the church. We should know that. In far greater measure. It should be the one place.

[24 : 20] Where we can be more. Honest with each other. Safely. Than any other place. And Paul assumes that.

As he addresses. And as he instructs. The. The Colossians. He says in verse 9. Do not lie to each other. Since you have taken off. Your old self.

With its practices. And have put on. The new self. Paul is saying. There needs to be an honesty. Amongst you. In this struggle. In this battle.

That we are. All engaged in. You've heard the quote. Often. And I'm not sure. Where the. The original quote. Came from. But it's something. Along these lines.

The church. Is not a showroom. For saints. It's a hospital. For sinners. And if the church.

[25 : 12] Is a hospital. For sinners. Which it is. We can be honest. With each other. About the struggles. That we have. I'm not saying. That we should form a line. And all.

Spill out our darkest. Deepest. Secrets. At the microphone. But there should be. A depth. Of fellowship. Amongst Christians. In this church.

And amongst other churches too. Because we're all. Struggling with the same problem. Of sin. And we're all.

Seeking the same. Solution. We want. To put it. To death. To struggle together. So let's struggle together. You know.

Let's be honest enough. Sometimes to say. Can you pray for me? You know. I'm having a hard time. I'm struggling in my marriage.

[26 : 13] I'm struggling. With this particular sin. I'm struggling with this area in my life. And I just seem to be going under. And I'd like your support.

I'd like your prayers. I think what stops us being honest is the fear that others will look down on us. And think less of us for admitting our failures.

And yet we're reminded in verse 11 here. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free.

In other words, there's no hierarchy of Christians. There's no class, race, structure amongst the church. There are no levels of accomplishment. We're all in this together.

And Christ is all and is in all. I'll underline that last wee bit. Christ is all and is in all.

[27 : 19] You know, if we could keep that in the forefront of our minds. If you and I could keep that in the forefront of our minds. If we could remember that Christ is in every believer.

When we sit alongside. The spirit of Christ is in every believer. That we share a cup of tea with. Christ, the Holy Spirit.

Is in every believer that we bumped into in the street. If we could remember that. And see that before we see anything else about them.

That would really transform our relationships. That would deepen our fellowship with each other. To know that Christ is in us.

So we're to know fellowship with each other. We're to know the gravity of sin. We're to name our sin.

[28 : 28] And finally. We're called to know God. Now that's the essence of it all. We're called to know God.

Paul speaks verse 10. Of those who have put on the new self. Which has been renewed in knowledge. In the image of its creator.

The knowledge that Paul speaks of here. It's a knowledge that isn't simply head knowledge. He's speaking about heart knowledge.

This is not a knowledge that we glean from a desktop study. This is the personal knowledge that comes from an intimate relationship.

With our creator God. This is not a stagnant knowledge that deteriorates and fades over time.

Remember like the exams you would cram for.

[29 : 33] You take all this information in. You use it on the day. And then you. It just dissolves. It's obsolete. This is not the knowledge that Paul is speaking of.

It's not a stagnant. Fading. Deteriorating knowledge. It's a. It's a. Ever increasing. Soul thrilling. Living knowledge. Of the God who made us.

And who loves us. There's some people that we. We see. And we admire them. We feel drawn.

Towards them. And. And. And yet. They hold us at a distance. You make your approach.

Tentatively. But.

You know that they're kind of holding us at a distance. You can get close to them. If you're people who use Twitter and these sort of things. There's VIPs you follow on Twitter.

[30 : 34] Now you're interested in them. There's an attraction towards them. And. Um. And. And they will allow you to follow them. But they don't really want you to know them.

They want you to know what they present. To you. In terms of their profile. But they don't really want you to know them. And come close to them. But the staggering thing.

That is revealed to us in scripture. Is that our creator. God. Wants us to know him. And not just know about him.

Not just do a PhD. In theology. So we can gather more grey matter. He wants us to know him. And be close to him.

The one. Whom to know his life. And if you and I are to be. Christians who are fresh. And lively. And bright.

[31 : 37] If we are to be. Christians who are daily renewed. And strengthened. In the battle against sin. If we are to be Christians. Who are increasingly. Growing mature.

And steady. Then the best. Ambition we can have. Is an ambition.

To know God better. The best thing. We can. Seek to do. Each day. Is to draw closer to him.

And to go deeper with him. Remember when you first went into the swimming pool. The first time you went in. I can remember Stornway.

Screaming the place down. When they tried to take me from the toddlers. To the deeper session. But when you first went into the swimming pool. You go in. As a child. And you're splashing about. Up to your ankles.

[32 : 35] In the toddler pool. With the water. Coming over your head. And the balls. And the balloons. Or whatever the toys are. And then after a few weeks. Cammie.

Or whoever was Cammie's predecessor. Says. Right. Out of the toddler pool. Let's go into the shallow end. So you're off into the shallow end. And the armbands are on. And you're splashing about in the shallow end.

For a wee while. And there comes a point. When you're getting the hang of things. Where the person instructing you. Will say. Right. Armbands off.

Let's launch out into the deep. And that's a picture. Of. How we should be. In our personal knowledge.

Of God. One commentator says. When a man. Is led through the waters of salvation. These are ankle deep at first.

[33 : 36] But as he progresses. They become knee deep. And then reach. To the loins. And are finally impassable. Except.

By swimming. Where are you and I. As we finish. Where are you and I. In our.

In the pool. Of our knowledge. Of God. Are we. Are we. Content. To splash about.

In the showers. Or do we want to go deep with him. And it's only as we go deeper. With the Lord. It's only as we get to know him better. That we are enabled to put sin to death. And to experience fullness.

[34 : 32] Of life. As our new self. In Christ. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Through. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.