

Col 3:5-11

The New Life in Christ - Put to death the old life of sin

The new life we have from being united with Christ on one hand involves stopping bad behavior and on the other hand replacing it with good behavior. It also can be described as putting off wrong attitudes and putting on good ones.

In these verses Paul uses the analogies of “putting to death” something and “putting off” something to describe the process of ending bad behavior and attitudes.

Translation note:

- NASB – “consider the members of your earthly body as dead...” – only implies a certain frame of mind
- But in the margin notes - literally it says “put to death”
- All other major translation – “put to death your members which are upon the earth”
- More than a frame of mind – its an action to be done

Why does Paul tell us put to death the members of body when he had just said we have already died? (3:3)

Already dead to sin – because of our legal union with Christ

- Positionally, we are perfect
- The effects of Christ’s death have been legally applied to us.
- We are cleansed, forgiven, and justified right here and now
- We have died to sin and our life is hidden with Christ in God
- In this part of our union with Christ, we are passive – God considers us to have already died and been raised with Christ.

Not dead yet to sin

- Practically, we are not perfect...yet
- Even though the eternal affects of sin have been “killed” – sin still remains in us
- Even though we have made a conscious decision to die to sin as a way of life, we are still tempted by it and give in it.
- This is where our spiritual union with Christ comes in
- Our union with Christ is the source of what we call sanctification – the process of being made perfect – his indwelling Spirit changing us into his own image.
- This process continues all our life and will culminate in completion when Christ returns and we are glorified.
- We participate in this aspect of our union with Christ.

Therefore we are told to put to death the sinful deeds of the body.

- We are told to participate in the process of sanctification – Phil 2:12-13
- We NEED to do this - we cannot just continue in sin that grace may abound.
- We CAN do this because we have been made a new person in Christ, raised to walk in newness of life by his resurrection power which is at work continually in us.

Why does Paul describe this as putting to death the members of our body?

Killing sin hurts

- In Colossians, Paul emphasizes we have been raised with Christ as new creatures with the power of Christ dwelling within us to fight against sin.
- But it is still going to be a painful and difficult process to go through.
- Sinful passions and desires have a way of taking such a strong hold on our whole being (body and soul) that when we try to stop giving in to them it feels like we are killing ourselves.
- Denying the sinful cravings of our flesh can feel like we are amputating parts of our body...it hurts. Nobody likes to go through pain.
- The lie of temptation is that we just have to fulfill this desire and that the supposed enjoyment that we will receive by going through with it will be worth it.
- Of course it is not, but exactly the opposite. Rom 8:13a – “If you are living according to the flesh, you must die.”

Killing sin can be done

- In Romans, Paul emphasizes that we have been set free from the rule of sin and are no longer slaves to sin because our union with Christ – Rom 6:6-7
- We have been raised from the dead with Christ so that we might walk in newness of life.
- Therefore we can act upon that fact and stop giving in to it.
- We now have a choice to control the desire of our flesh.
- We don't have to let our bodies be engaged in evil deeds.

Killing sin must be done

- In Romans, Paul continues to say that since we don't have to sin, we must therefore make a supreme effort to slay all evil passions and desires.
- Rom 6:12 – Do not let sin reign in your mortal body.
- Rom 6:13 – Do not present the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness
- The mortification of sin – the constant effort of putting to death sin in our lives
- Matt 5:29-30 READ – Jesus taught the same thing
- It can only be done by the power of the Spirit - Rom 8:13b – “... if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”
- Did you notice that this is a promise, not just a statement?

What particular sins does Paul say we need to put to death?

Paul is talking about what our new life in Christ is to look like – what the results are of being united with Him.

- In this section he categorizes two groups of sin - *unholy love & unholy hate*
- He says we need to put to death all forms of unholy love – lustful desires and actions
- Later in this section he will say we need to put off all forms of unholy hate – unkind feelings and actions

Put to death all forms of unholy love

Paul's list goes from outward actions to the internal desires that produce the outward actions.

- Immorality – lit. “fornication”, a specific sexual sin
- Impurity – all forms for unclean sexual behavior and thought
- Passion & evil desire – hard to distinguish between the two
 - Both point to longings for self-gratification
 - Passion and desire are not bad in themselves – God has passion and desire for good things which lead to good actions – being created in the image of God we can also greatly desire good things
 - But evil passions and desires lead to bad actions
 - The context is the sexual realm – immoral and impurity sexual behavior come from evil passions and desires that build up within us
 - James 1:14-15 – “Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin.”
- Greed/covetousness – another form of self-gratification which often is connected with immoral sexual desires and behavior.
 - Ex: coveting another man's wife.
 - Also of course can be the craving to satisfy oneself with wealth.
 - Either way, our hearts make an idol out of what it is coveting after: either illicit sex or money.

Paul gives a couple of compelling reason why we should make a supreme effort to slay all evil passions and desires.

- The wrath of God will come on those who live this way.
 - The tense of the verb indicates that this is so definite that it is as if it is already done.
 - “These sins attract God's displeasure like a magnet attracts iron or like a high steeple on an isolated hill draws lightning.” Hendrickson
 - God's wrath is not to be taken lightly.
 - As great as God's love is so is his wrath.
 - “It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Heb 10:31
 - We must make a supreme effort to slay all our passions and desire looking to the resurrection power of Christ in our lives because we don't want to find ourselves in a backslidden state in which we now have no assurance of salvation – find ourselves under the wrath and curse of God.
- This kind of sinful life is what we used to have - it's what we used to be, but not anymore.
 - We died with Christ to that old way of life.
 - We have now been raised as a new person to newness of life with Christ.
 - We have received the circumcision of the heart made without hands.
 - We need not forget these truths and act accordingly.
 - A reminder of the shameful way we used to live should be a motivation in itself to keep away from it.

Put aside all forms of unholy hate

The former list of sins involved personal impurity. The next list of sins involves disruption in relationships with others. Unkind feelings and actions always disrupt relationships.

The previous list began with outward acts and moved to motives behind those actions. The present list begins with motives and moves to actions they result in.

- Wrath & anger – deep seated or settled indignation; temper leading to outbursts
- Malice – feelings of evil towards others or cruel intentions toward them
- Slander – scornful or insolent language directed toward someone with the intent of defaming their name or reputation
- Abusive speech – foul abusive language directed toward someone with the intent of tearing them down
- Lying – not telling or portraying the truth - often the result of malice and hatred; deceitful language points to a lack of love toward the one being lied to

The reason for putting these things aside is because we “have laid aside the old self with its evil practices 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”.

- We profess to be followers of Christ
 - When we trusted Christ, we renounced our old way of life and died with Christ to it.
 - We committed to a new way of living.
 - God raised us up with Christ for the specific purpose of us walking in newness of life (Rom 6:4, Eph 2:10)
 - Therefore we need to strive to live up to our profession
- God is at work making us into followers of Christ
 - God is at work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil2:13)
 - He is creating the image of Christ in us
 - Our union with Christ caused this transforming process to happen.
 - Our union with Christ is the source of a true knowledge of God (3:10)
 - Therefore since God is at work in us, we need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).

This time Paul uses the symbolism of taking off an old undesirable garment and putting on a new desirable one.

- “Put them all aside” (3:8), we have laid aside the old self with its evil practices” (3:9), “put on the new self” (3:10)
- Nobody wants to put on old filthy worn out clothes.
- This is way we need to look at these kinds of attitudes and behavior – things we don’t want to be caught dead in.

Who is this work of sanctification for?

- Believers from all races, languages and position in life experience the same grace of being recreated into the image of Christ.
 - This “renewal” of the soul is for all believers
- There are no special groups.
 - All nationalities included
 - Not limited to those circumcised
 - From civilized or uncivilized societies / cultures
 - Educated or uneducated
 - Rich or poor
 - Free or slave
- Union with Christ and the resulting sanctifying work happens in all who trust in Christ and renounce their old life of sin.
- Christ is all
 - He is all anyone needs to be right with God
 - He is supremely sufficient to save and sanctify anyone
- Christ is in all
 - People from all walks of life who trust Christ and follow Him are equally filled with His Spirit
 - We are all brothers and sisters in Christ – there are no barriers – we should not let there be any barriers to fellowship
- Paul hints at the evil of slavery – he never says whether or not it is good.
 - 3:22-4:1 – His instructions for slaves do not include seeking freedom, his instructions to master do not include freeing their slaves.
 - But the truth that all types of people can and are being made into the image of Christ should cause masters to question whether or not they really have the right to keep someone in bondage, or to say that they own them.
 - It should instead move them to view these people as equal brothers and sister in Christ.