

June 28, 2020

Your New Relationship With Sin

Colossians 3:5-10

LTS: Gal. 5:16-25

The soul-satisfying grace of God
Should make us hate our sin.

Near the city of Jerusalem some 700 years ago, a prophet by the name of Jeremiah served as God's primary messenger to his people. His, however, was not a happy message. The centuries following Israel's successful capture of the promised Land, were filled with stories of God's blessing and Israel's unfaithfulness.

The spiritual shepherds in Israel had led the people astray. God's covenant with them was being violated on every side. His commandments were being ignored. The nation had been prosperous, to be sure, but the people had given themselves over to sexual promiscuity, blatant idolatry, and the abandonment of even the most basic teaching of God's word. (Sounds a little like our day, doesn't it?). God's message was that his patience with Israel was about to come to an end. Their land would be attacked by a world power and many would be killed, others captured and taken into exile in Babylon for 70 years.

In chapter 2 of Jeremiah's message, God explains how his people had arrived at such a dark moment in their history. Here is what He said through the prophet: (Jer. 2:7-13)

I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. ⁸ The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit. ⁹ "Therefore I still contend with you, declares the LORD, and with your children's children I will contend. ¹⁰ For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. ¹¹ Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. ¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³ for my people have committed two evils: they have

forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

I think this narrative is an appropriate place to begin this morning's message because I think Paul is attempting to help us NOT make the mistake Israel made. To this very day God offers Himself as the overflowing Fountain that satisfies our souls. And most of us here today would claim that we have drunk deeply from its spring.

We remember that as Jesus sat at Jacob's well speaking with a woman whose "broken cistern was" a love of men (of which she had had 5, and was apparently on her sixth) he claimed to be that very Fountain of Living Water Jeremiah spoke of and that she so desperately needed. Moreover, he said, "the water that I will give [you] will become in [you] a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

By these words Jesus was (and still is) inviting all people everywhere to come and satisfy their thirsty souls in Him by the power of free, redeeming grace. And when that happens – when a sinner surrenders to Christ and hangs all their hope on his atoning death and righteous, resurrected life, that person suddenly experiences a new relationship with God.

No longer does God consider that one an object of His just and holy wrath. Now when God thinks about that man or woman, He thinks of them as united to Christ in every meaningful respect. In other words, everything that Christ is and owns is ours!

- His death is ours,
- His resurrection is ours,
- His righteousness is ours,
- His holiness is ours,
- His ascension to the Father's throne is ours,
- His kingdom is ours,
- His glory is ours,
- His Father is ours,
- His family is ours,
- His home is ours,
- His Name is ours,
- His joy is ours,
- His Wisdom is ours,
- His Mind is ours,
- His Spirit is ours,
- His promises are ours;
- His people are ours
- His World is ours

...And the list goes on.

But what many tend to miss (and Israel completely ignored) is that when your heart is savingly satisfied in Christ, you not only get a new relationship with God, but you get a new relationship with SIN.

I believe this is precisely Paul's message to the believers in Colossae and to us this morning. But don't take my word for it! Let's read it together.

Read Col. 3:5-11

For just over half of his letter to the mostly Gentile believers in Colossae, Paul has set before them Jesus – “in whom the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and we are complete in Him.” Through Him we now have a new and eternal relationship with God. Nevertheless, as long as we live East of Eden and South of heaven, we will certainly be tempted to sin in many of the same old ways we have sinned in the past.

The question is, since we have this new relationship with God and all has been forgiven forever, does sin even matter anymore? Does God care that we sin? Some evangelicals in our day say “No!” Paul, however, responds with a resounding YES! Yes, your sin matters to God. Make no mistake! He wants all of your temptation and sin to be utterly defeated p not only in principle but in practice as well. Here's How I prefer to say it:

The soul-satisfying grace of God
Should make us hate our sin.

Paul's message in these 7 short verses are broken into two neat sections, each followed by a motivating statement – one negative and the other positive.

The first section we might call

I. Defeating sins Against Your Body

II. Defeating Sins Against Christ's Body

The first comes at us right at the beginning (3:5) where Paul begins talking about defeating sins against your body.

I. Killing sins Against Your Own body

1. At the beginning (3:5), notice the conjunction, Therefore. In the NAS the very first word is “therefore.” And whenever we come across a “therefore: we know Paul is about to build on what has already been said; namely that (2:20) “You have died with Christ.” Likewise (3:1), You have been raised with Christ. Again (3:3) “You have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ...” By now, you understand that Paul is appealing to us based on the benefits we have by virtue of our **Union with Christ** which we have freely received by grace through faith.

2. What is Paul’s appeal? What does He want us to do in light of the fact that we have died with Christ and been raised with Christ? Paul says, Therefore, *“Put to death what is earthly in you.”* Now this is interesting. Normally when we hear Paul talking about death, he means the death Christ died to free us from the penalty of sin. But here he’s is talking about a kind of death that we ruthlessly bring down upon on our own persistent sin.

3. The word for “Put to death” can also mean “To render impotent or powerless.” I prefer that translation because I know that in this life certain temptations tend to return and return. They seem to haunt us. You may not be able to “Kill” them completely in this life, but you do have the power to render such temptation Impotent and powerless in your life. And Paul wants us to know that you can do that even with some of the most enslaving kinds of sin.

4. What kind of sin is Paul talking about? Well, he actually names five that were especially relevant in his day. I’m calling them sins against one’s own body. Look closely and you will see that these are all sexual sins.

- A. Pornea - (from which we get the word Pornography) This is any kind of sexual immorality.
- B. Impurity
- C. Passion
- D. Evil desire (lust)

E. Covetousness which is idolatry. This is a reflection from the 10th commandment which warns us away from Coveting your neighbor's wife.

5. Listen, isn't it amazing how relevant this warning is? These are the same kinds of temptation that people young and old alike find themselves wrestling with even in our day? We live in such a sexualized society there is no escaping the influence of illicit sex.

6. Now, I am calling these sins against your own body because of what Paul say about sexual sin in 1 Cor. 6:18. Paul writes, "*Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.*"

- A. When you give in to the temptation of sexual immorality, you are putting yourself in danger of experiencing all kinds of unwanted and painful consequences in your own body. And that's without mentioning the profound spiritual consequences to your soul.
- B. Sexual immorality is not only a sin against God, it is a sin against yourself?
- C. As the author of Proverbs warns, "Can a man take fire into his lap and not be burned? (Prov. 6:27).

7. Now I said that after each of the two lists there is a motivating statement from Paul.

Statement of Motivation # 1

- A. (3:6) Paul says, "On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked when you were living in them."
- B. Paul is saying, there was a time when you thought sexual immorality was O.K. After all, your entire culture was awash in it! Moreover, it was part of your very life?
- C. But around the time that you first heard the gospel, you discovered that "The wrath of God is coming against those who practice such things" Not only the wrath of God's abandonment, as in Rom 1, where God turns sinners over to their own sin. Here, he is speaking of the eschatological judgment that will be brought to bear on the last day.
- D. But you, says Paul! You have been rescued from that! The grace of God has saved you from the wrath of God! As Dane Ortlund, writes:

The end-times judgment that awaits all humans has, for those who are in Christ, already taken place. We who are in Christ no longer look to the future of judgment, but to the past; at the cross, where we see our punishment happening, all our sins were being punished in Jesus.¹

As John Newton once wrote, "Our sins may are many, but His mercies

¹ Dane Ortlund, *Gentle & Lowly*, (Wheaton, Crossway, 2020),

are more.²

8. In light of all this how should a Christian respond to temptations toward sexual immorality? He should run to the fountain of living water and drink deeply of the mercies of Christ. By this you will mortify the deeds of the flesh and at the same time, satisfy you're your thirsty soul.

9. This brings us to the second point:

II. Defeating Sins Against Christ's Body

1. Paul continues (3:8) "But now you!" That is, it may very well be that you once were part of that culture of sexual immorality, but not anymore!

A. This is reminiscent of Paul's words in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 where he writes, Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God," close quote.
And because that is true, you NOT only have a new relationship with God, but a new relationship with Sin. The grace of God has taught you to hate your sin. You no longer seek satisfaction in the broken cistern you dug with your own hands, Now you quench your soul at the fountain of living water which is none other than **Jesus Christ**.

2. Back in Col. 3, Paul says, "But now you must put them all away.

- A. "Put them away" is the language of stripping one's self of his filthy, dirty clothes and putting on a new suite of clothes that's clean and pure and beautiful.
- B. S.L. Johnson says "Clothes don't make the man, but they sometimes reflect the man, and they often reflect the man very accurately. And the things we wear (figuratively speaking) express the kind of faith we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. To use a different figure, we might say, "By their fruit you will know them." Only in Paul's analogy, people will know you are a Christian if you are dressed in a holy life.

² Ibid, p. 187

D. The apostle Peter used a similar figure of speech when he wrote (1 Pet 3:1-4)

Wives, be subject to your husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure behavior. ³ Do not let your adorning (clothing) be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.

E. In these figures of speech, Christians adorn themselves with the apparel of holy lives. So, Paul says, Put away the old filthy, dirty garments of sinful living. Then, in case you were not struck by the list of sexual sins, he offers a new list that should strike every one of us

- a. Anger:
- b. Wrath:
- c. Malice:
- d. Slander:
- e. Obscene talk:
- f. Do not lie to one another

3. Once again, Paul offers a statement of motivation. Why should you who are United to Christ stop sinning against others? Paul says (9) because “you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.”

4. Paul now changes his figure of speech from new clothes to becoming a new person. This is what is pictured for us every time we witness a baptism. The sinner dies to sin and the old self, and is raised to a new life and a new way of living. That’s why you hear me say in the waters of baptism, “Buried with him in death – raised to walk in newness of life.”

5. Because you are now united with Christ, He (by the Spirit) is constantly renewing you. He is recreating you. He is systematically and progressively making you into the person God intended for you to be when he created man in the beginning. He is making you like Christ.

6. The salvation that Jesus gives is life changing. You get a new relationship with God. You get a new relationship with Sin. And finally, you get a new relationship with Christians.

Read v. 11

7. When I read this verse in context this week I thought, “What in the world does this verse have to do with the price of tea in London? It just didn’t seem to fit! But then I realized that each of the sins in the second list are potential sins against the body of Christ. Each one of them is able cause division.

8. All of us have committed these mostly-verbal sins against others who lay claim to Christ. Paul is saying, Stop it! And stop it Now. Why? Because Jesus is not only reconciling people to himself from every nation and background, but he is also reconciling them to one another in the church!

9. Instead of relating as different and hostile classes of people who are suspicious one another and hostile toward one another, we are to be ONE. Why? Because “Christ is all and in all.” That is, We are all in him and therefore part of one another.

10. Beloved, how kind of the Lord to lay this text before us this week. With all the racial tensions in our country right now, all the anger, rage, slander, and malice we see and hear in the streets, it’s impossible to miss the contrast between what the world offers compared to what we already have in the church, where there is no distinction. Here we come back to our Union with Christ. Paul says, “But Christ is all and in all.” The world around us is in desperate need of the gospel that causes us to relate to one another like this. So put your heart up to God’s spiritual X-Ray machine and see if there is any sin that you need to put to death and lay aside.

11. Someone will ask, “But how do I defeat the sin that I know is in my life?:

III. How to Defeat Sin in My Life:

1. Well, that's a discussion that will take a little more time than we have this morning, but let me remind you that Humanism, Legalism, Mysticism, and Asceticism are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

2. So what should you do? Paul has already told us. He said (3:1) If you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above: namely Christ himself. Then he says (3:2) "Set your minds on things above, not on the things that are on the earth. That is, Set your mind on Christ.

13. In other words, abandon your broken cisterns that can hold no water (your cherished sins) and fly to the Fountain of living Water, Jesus Christ, who alone can satisfy our thirsty soul.

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