

Putting Sin To Death: Colossians 3:5–11

Day 1: Put Sin to Death

Read: Colossians 3:5–7, Romans 6:6–14, Romans 8:12–13, Galatians 5:24, Matthew 5:27–30

Paul does not tell Christians to negotiate with sin. He does not tell us to manage it, rename it, or keep it in a locked closet where it only comes out on bad days. He says, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you.” That is strong language because sin is a deadly enemy. It is not a pet. It is not a harmless personality flaw. It is rebellion against God, and it always promises more than it gives.

The word “therefore” matters. Paul is not telling us to kill sin so we can belong to Christ. He is telling us to kill sin because we already belong to Christ. Earlier in Colossians 3, Paul said that believers have died and been raised with Christ. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. So the fight against sin is not an attempt to earn God’s love. It is the fruit of already being loved, forgiven, and united to Jesus.

That changes how we fight. We do not fight like slaves trying to earn a place at the table. We fight like sons and daughters who have already been brought into the Father’s house. Grace does not make us casual about sin. Grace gives us the power and reason to make war against it.

This means repentance must get specific. Vague repentance sounds safe, but it rarely changes anything. “Lord, help me do better” may be sincere, but Paul names sins. He names sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. We should learn to name our sins too. Not to wallow in guilt, but to bring them into the light where Christ gives mercy and strength.

The Christian life is not sinless perfection. If it were, Paul would not need to command believers to put sin to death. But the Christian life is real warfare. Sin may remain, but it no longer reigns. Christ has broken its dominion. So today, by the Spirit, take sin seriously. Do not make peace with what Christ died to destroy.

Reflection Questions

1. What specific sin do I tend to manage rather than put to death?
2. How does union with Christ change the way I fight sin?
3. Where have I been too vague in repentance?

Practical Application

Name one specific sin before God today. Confess it honestly, ask for grace, and take one concrete step to cut off what feeds it.

Prayer

God my Father, thank You that I do not fight sin in my own strength or to earn Your love. You have united me to Christ, and in Him I have died to the old life and been raised to walk in newness of life. Help me stop making excuses for the sins I have tolerated. Give me honesty, courage, and Spirit-given strength to put to death what does not belong to Christ. Teach me to fight from grace, not for grace. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 2: Desire Gone Crooked

Read: Colossians 3:5, Exodus 20:17, Romans 1:21–25, James 1:13–15, 1 John 2:15–17

Paul's list in Colossians 3:5 moves from outward sins to inward desires. He names sexual immorality and impurity, but then he presses deeper: passion, evil desire, and covetousness. Paul is not only concerned with what we do. He is concerned with what we love, crave, imagine, and worship.

That is uncomfortable, because most of us prefer to measure holiness by what can be seen. We like external scorecards. They are easier to manage. But God goes after the heart. He is not satisfied with cleaned-up behavior while our desires remain bent toward sin. The Lord is not impressed with whitewashed tombs. Jesus already covered that category, and it did not go well.

Covetousness may seem like an odd addition to a list that begins with sexual sin, but Paul tells us exactly why it belongs there: covetousness is idolatry. Coveting says, "God has not given me enough." Lust says, "God's boundaries are keeping me from joy." Greed says, "If I had that, I would finally be satisfied." Idolatry says, "This created thing can give me what only God can give."

Idols are not always statues. Sometimes they are screens, bodies, bank accounts, reputations, relationships, comfort, control, or the constant need to be admired. Anything we trust, serve, crave, or obey in the place of God has become an idol. And idols are terrible saviors. They take and take, but they never give life.

The hope of the gospel is that Christ does more than forgive outward sins. He restores worship. He reorders loves. He teaches us to desire what is good, holy, and lasting. He does not merely slap our hands away from forbidden fruit. He gives us Himself.

So when you confront sinful desire, do not only ask, "What did I do?" Ask, "What was I seeking? What was I trusting? What did I believe would satisfy me apart from God?" The deeper the diagnosis, the sweeter the cure. Christ is not threatened by the depth of your sin. He came to save sinners all the way down.

Reflection Questions

1. What desires most often compete with my love for Christ?
2. Where am I tempted to believe God has withheld something necessary for my joy?
3. What created thing am I most tempted to treat as ultimate?

Practical Application

Identify one desire that has become disordered. Write down what it promises, why that promise is false, and how Christ is better.

Prayer

God my Father, search my heart and expose the desires I have allowed to rule me. Forgive me for treating created things as though they can satisfy what only You can give. Teach me to see my covetousness and lust for what they are, not harmless cravings but false worship. Reorder my loves by Your Word and Spirit. Help me find my joy, security, and satisfaction in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 3: Put Away the Sins of the Mouth

Read: Colossians 3:8–9, Ephesians 4:25–32, James 3:1–12, Proverbs 18:21, Matthew 12:33–37

After Paul tells us to put to death the sins of disordered desire, he turns to sins that often feel more ordinary: anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, and lying. These are not lesser sins. They are the old life showing up in our relationships, homes, conversations, and churches.

Paul's list moves from the heart to the mouth. Anger simmers. Wrath boils over. Malice wants to harm. Slander uses words to tear down another person's name. Obscene talk corrupts what should be used for truth and blessing. Lying manipulates reality and breaks trust. The tongue may be small, but as James reminds us, it can set a forest on fire. Anyone who has lived in a family or served in a church knows that is not dramatic language. That is Tuesday.

We often excuse these sins because they feel respectable. Anger gets renamed "being honest." Slander gets renamed "concern." Gossip becomes "a prayer request." Harshness becomes "telling it like it is." Lying becomes "avoiding awkwardness." It is amazing how often sin gets a church name tag.

But Paul says to put these things away. They do not fit the new self. They are old-life clothing, and Christians are not called to keep wearing what belongs to the grave.

This is especially important in the church. The body of Christ is meant to be a people of truth, love, confession, forgiveness, and grace. That cannot happen where anger rules, slander spreads, and lying protects image. A church can be deeply damaged by scandalous sin, but it can also be slowly poisoned by angry people with theological vocabulary.

Christ died for sins of the mouth too. He bore our lies, slander, bitterness, filthy speech, and cutting words. And by His Spirit, He teaches us to speak truth, confess sin, build up the body, and use words as instruments of grace.

Today, consider whether your words are helping others see Christ or simply helping your old self stay comfortable.

Reflection Questions

1. Which speech sin in Colossians 3:8–9 am I most tempted to excuse?

2. Are people safe with my words when they are not in the room?
3. Where do I need to confess sinful speech to someone I have wounded?

Practical Application

Before speaking about someone today, ask: “Is this true? Is it necessary? Is it loving? Would I say it this way if they were present?”

Prayer

God my Father, forgive me for the ways I have used my words to wound, hide, exaggerate, slander, or protect my own image. I confess that my mouth often reveals what is still sinful in my heart. Make me quick to repent and slow to speak in anger. Teach me to love truth because Christ is the truth. Use my words to build up, heal, confess, encourage, and bless. In Jesus’ name, Amen

Day 4: You Have Put On the New Self

Read: Colossians 3:9–10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:20–24, Romans 6:1–11, Ezekiel 36:26–27

Paul does not merely say, “Stop doing bad things because bad things are bad.” He goes deeper. He says, “You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self.” In other words, sin no longer fits because it no longer matches who you are in Christ.

The old self is who we were in Adam: guilty, corrupt, enslaved to sin, under death, and bound to the old creation. The new self is who we are in Christ: forgiven, raised, indwelt by the Spirit, freed from sin’s dominion, and brought into new creation life. Paul is not saying, “Work hard enough and maybe one day you will become new.” He is saying, “In Christ, you are new. Now live from that new identity.”

That is a massive difference.

Many Christians live as though their sin is their truest identity. “I am just angry.” “I am just lustful.” “I am just bitter.” “I am just anxious.” “I am just this way.” But Paul will not let us confuse remaining sin with our deepest identity. If you are in Christ, your sin may describe a real battle, but it does not define who you are.

This protects us from both pride and despair. Pride says, “Look how well I am doing.” Despair says, “I will never change.” The gospel says, “You belong to Christ. Now become what you are.”

Paul also says the new self “is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” The Christian life includes decisive change and ongoing renewal. You have been made new, and God is still renewing you. That renewal happens through the knowledge of God in Christ, by the Word and Spirit. God is restoring His image in His people.

So do not reduce Christianity to behavior management. Christ is not merely making you more respectable. He is making you more like Himself. He is restoring what sin has damaged. He is teaching you to live as a new creation in a world still wearing grave clothes.

Reflection Questions

1. Where am I tempted to treat my sin as my identity?
2. How does being “in Christ” change the way I view my struggle with sin?

3. Am I placing myself regularly under the Word that God uses to renew me?

Practical Application

Write this sentence somewhere visible today: “My sin may be real, but Christ is my life.”
Return to it when discouragement or temptation comes.

Prayer

God my Father, thank You that in Christ I am not who I once was. You have given me new life, and You are renewing me by Your Word and Spirit. Forgive me for treating my sin as though it defines me more deeply than Christ does. Help me believe what You say is true. Make me humble, hopeful, and diligent as You restore Your image in me. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 5: Christ Is All, and In All

Read: Colossians 3:10–11, Galatians 3:27–29, Ephesians 2:13–22, 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, Revelation 7:9–10

Paul ends this section with a glorious statement: “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” The new self does not merely change private morality. It creates a new people.

Paul names some of the deepest divisions of his world: ethnic division, religious background, cultural status, and social position. Greek and Jew. Circumcised and uncircumcised. Barbarian and Scythian. Slave and free. These categories shaped how people saw themselves and one another. Some carried pride. Others carried shame. Some were honored. Others were despised.

Paul is not pretending those earthly realities disappeared. A Jew did not stop having Jewish ancestry. A slave did not stop being a slave when the letter was read aloud. Paul is saying those identities no longer define a believer’s standing before God or place in the church. They are real, but they are not ultimate. Christ is ultimate.

That matters because every age builds identity ladders. People rank themselves by money, race, education, politics, beauty, influence, family background, or usefulness. The church must not baptize those ladders and pretend they are spiritual maturity. In Christ, the ground is level. The lifelong church kid and the recently converted prodigal stand on the same ground. The polished and the rough-around-the-edges stand on the same ground. The strong and the weak stand on the same ground.

That ground is Christ.

This does not mean doctrine does not matter. It does not mean holiness does not matter. Paul has just told us to put sin to death. But none of our secondary identities or spiritual growth becomes a basis for superiority. Christ is all.

The church is meant to display this. We help one another put sin to death. We speak truth. We refuse slander. We confess, forgive, bear burdens, welcome the weak, and restore the repentant. We look at one another and say, “Christ died for you. Christ lives in you. You are my brother. You are my sister.”

This is not sentimental community. This is new creation life.

Reflection Questions

1. What secondary identity am I most tempted to treat as ultimate?
2. Do I subtly rank other believers by background, usefulness, maturity, or similarity to me?
3. How can I help make the church a clearer display that Christ is all?

Practical Application

Reach out to someone in the church who is different from you in background, age, personality, or life situation. Encourage them as a brother or sister in Christ.

Prayer

God my Father, thank You for making one new people in Christ. Forgive me for the pride, suspicion, and selfishness that keep me from loving Your people well. Teach me to see my brothers and sisters through the gospel, not through worldly categories. Help our church display the beauty of Christ-centered unity, holiness, truth, and love. May Christ be all in my life and in our church. In Jesus' name, Amen