

How To Live In The Image Of Our Creator

Colossians 3:1-11 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

It's not hard to find sin. It fills the world around us. Even worse it often fills our homes, and hearts. The question is not if it is there but what to do about it.

So what are we going to do about it? This is one of the core tenants of any religion. How are we going to make ourselves better?

We saw last week how the rules and regulations which come from the mind of man are useless. They just aren't going to cut. Fasting and festivals, going and hiding in a cave, forcing women to cover from head to toe so that men aren't tempted to lust, seven steps to financial happiness, all these things in some cases have some value but they are "of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." **Colossians 2:23**

So what is the answer? Should we just give up? Should we simply indulge our desires so that they go away? We are saved in Christ anyway so we don't have to really worry about our sins. We can ask for forgiveness whenever so it doesn't really matter.

Absolutely not says Paul. Sin is serious. It needs to be dealt with not ignored. Christ has called us to the image of God not to the image of sin. Rejoicing in what Christ has done for us we want to be like him. Like a little kid who tries to wear his father's shoes, so we also try to put on the image of Christ. Even if we fail and fall every day still we try. But how?

In our text today we are going to see two things that make Paul's approach to sin, which isn't Paul's but God's, different from the useless ideas of men.

First Paul goes to the root of the problem. He doesn't waste his time with surface problems.

The first difference between what Paul presents and the false teachers. Not just the false teachers of Paul's day but of ours also. Is the nature of the problem.

Everybody knows if you just cut the top of the weed off it will grow back stronger. You have to get at the roots.

So Paul says with sin. Yes it is true that we don't want to steal or murder or cheat on our spouse. But Paul says the solution is to pull out the roots. I can't even count the number of times my Dad told me to make sure I got the roots when I was weeding the garden. The root of these sins is the desires of our heart. We need to pull the desires out.

Notice that Paul divides the sins he is talking about into two basics list. The first of these are the very inner desires that I am talking about. The sins of the heart. The sins that are against oneself. They often lead to sins against others but they begin by destroying oneself.

fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

These are the sins against ourselves because they destroy within us joy and peace in the gifts that God has given to us. They lead us to always want and desire what we don't have instead of rejoicing and being thankful for what God has given to us.

The excuse that we often tell ourselves is that we can't stop the thoughts. We can't stop the desires. We tell ourselves these things aren't real sins unless we act on them.

Remember the Luther quote? "You can't stop the birds from flying overhead, but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair." Yeah sometimes the thoughts are going to be there but Paul says put them away. Don't indulge them.

This is one of the problem with gambling. People think that gambling isn't really that big of deal. But most of the time gambling is an indulgence of covetousness.

Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

That's serious, God's judgment and anger is coming not because of murders and wars and prostitution. But because of the attitude of the hearts of men. That is what we read just before the flood.

Genesis 6:5 ⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

If there were at least some good in the heart there would be some hope, there would be something to work with despite the violence. But the thoughts of the heart are only evil continually. God's judgment is coming because of the attitude of the heart, even if no outward sins follow.

The thoughts and desires of the heart are serious. They are sin. And we should not indulge them and ought to repent when they enter our thoughts.

Secondly Paul list the sins of the tongue, the sins which are against each other:

anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another

"**anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy.**" These four sins show us the progression of anger. It begins with anger and proceeds to the point where you desire something bad, something evil to happen to a person.

So who knows why Jonah didn't want to go to Ninevah? Often people make the mistake of thinking he didn't want to go because he was afraid of what the people would do to him. This is not true. The reason Jonah himself gives us in chapter 4:1,2. After Jonah preached to Ninevah. Ninevah repented and God did not destroy them. Then we read this in Jonah 4:1,2

Jonah 4:1-2 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. ² So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

Jonah is angry because God DIDN'T destroy Ninevah. He wants them to suffer. And the reason he didn't go to Ninevah is because he knew that if they repented God would forgive them. Jonah wanted Ninevah to suffer because of all the things they had done to the Israelites.

This is what anger does. It builds and grows to the point where we desire and speak (blasphemy) evil against another person. Another person who is a sinner like us. Another person who Christ died for.

Filthy Language - This refers to coarse sexual jokes. Just as you shouldn't encourage those sinful thoughts in yourself, you also don't want to encourage them in others in the way you talk and joke.

Do not lie to one another – This includes any attempt to deceive. Even if what you are saying is not a lie, but you are speaking "truth" in such a way as to purposely deceive. Again we are quick to find excuses for this. A lot of times it just so much easier. A lot of time we think it will avoid an argument. We think it will help our relationship. But it doesn't. It destroys relationships. It eats away at them. Even if the person we lied to doesn't know that we lied they only suspect it. It eats away at the relationship.

Speaking lies destroys, speaking the truth builds up. Even when the truth is really hard to say or really hard to hear, being honest builds relationships.

Sometimes we lie because we think we are protecting someone from something. It doesn't work.

WE are all one in Christ Paul points out. Why would we treat each other in this way, anger, malice, speaking evil and lying. We are one in Christ therefore be open and honest and gracious and loving. Learn to reflect Christ with your tongue.

1. Live in your baptism

That is the first thing that makes what Paul says so different from the false teachers. He gets at the heart of the problem, the desires of the heart and the use of the tongue. But now how can we dig out those roots? How can we put off those thoughts? How can we tame the tongue and use it for good and not evil?

Not by fasting or punishing our body or hiding in caves. No says Paul but by the power of God working through our baptism.

Now the word baptism isn't used at all in this section. And in fact it is only mentioned once in the book of Colossians. And yet the references to baptism are all over the place.

raised with Christ, . . . ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ . . . Therefore put to death your members . . . put off all these . . . you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man*.

Elsewhere Paul makes it clear that these are all things we have done through and with our baptism.

Just as through the act of Christ's death justification is ours, and therefore we know that we are saved, because Christ died for our sins

Even so through His act of our baptism sanctification is ours, that is to say that the power of Christ is living within us. And by His power we are growing in the image of our Creator.

This is the glorious truth and promise that we have, that makes Paul's solution to sin so much greater than that of the false teachers. The promise that Scripture gives us in baptism. Through this promise we can say to the lies of Satan, "No." I do not have to live with anger. I do not have to live with lust. I do not have to live constantly coveting what I do not have.

Even if our enemies are the Assyrians, who rip out toenails, who put hooks in our noses and lead us away as slaves, even then I can learn to forgive. Because the power of Christ is in me through the promises he has given to me in my baptism.

Therefore daily I use these promises to drown and kill the sinful desires, the old man, and to live to Christ. I use my baptism to fill with my heart with songs to Christ instead of anger, to fill my thoughts with thanksgiving for what I have in Christ instead of coveting what I don't have.

Especially you Miriam, because today is your installation. Know that this is what you have been called to do. To fill your heart with love towards these little lambs that God has put in your care. To use your lips to speak the wonderful things that Christ has done and not lies and anger and hatred. Fill your life with the promises that are yours through Christ in your baptism.

For as Paul says we have died to the things of this world, and our life is hidden. This means it is kept safe and secure like a treasure hidden in a vault. Our life is secure hidden with Christ. Therefore set our hearts, let these things fill out thoughts, the things of Christ and not the things of this world.

We have the power to do this, for Christ is with us in our baptism.