Sin in the Crosshairs

Colossians 3:5-7

July 12, 2026

We are in Colossians chapter 3. Colossians chapter 3, and it's a most practical portion on the subject of sanctification. We're looking at Colossians 3:5 through 11. I'm going to read the text for us as we get started this morning. The whole section goes from Colossians 3:5 to 4:6, but we're going to focus our attention on this first section, verses 5 through 11, which is about dealing with remaining and indwelling sin in the life of the believer.

I want to start our reading in Colossians 3:1, and I'll read through that section through verse 11. "Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.

"When Christ, who is our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory. Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. On

account of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked when you were living in them, but now you also lay them all aside. Wrath, anger, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.

"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with its evil practices, and have put on the new man, who is being renewed to a full knowledge, according to the image of the one who created him. A renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman. But Christ is all and in all."

You can see, as Paul continues in verse 12 and following, he gives a list of virtues that we must put on as the elect of God who are holy and beloved. But first, before we get to what we need to put on, before we get to the positive instruction, there are two lists of vices, ten vices in all, five in each list, vices that we must abandoned.

In the two vice lists of verses 5 to 11, which we're going to cover this week and next, there are three commands. The first two are followed by vice lists, two commands, and then a command and vice list and a command and vice lists. And then the third deals with a single sin.

The third command is addressing a single sin. So the first command in verse 5 is "consider as dead." That's the verb. That's the command. It's also translated in some translations, kill, mortify, or put to death and then the list follows.

The second command is in verse 8, it's to lay aside or to put off; rid yourself of, is the idea and then that has a list. And then there's a third command that follows immediately after that, it's connected to it, in verse 9, and the command is, "do not lie to one another." Another thing to point out, separate from the structure, is that these vice lists are related to each other.

The first list leads to the second list, and then it's followed by the capstone sin of lying, that covers everything up. So the first vice list in verse 5, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, those have to do with the desires that drives the ambitions of the unbelieving heart.

When the sinner gets what he wants, gets what she wants, all seems to be well in the moment, but if you deny the sinner his or her desires, there's a second list for that: Wrath, anger, malice, slander, and abusive speech. Those are sins that happened when the desires of the first lists, the lust, the

ambitions that drive an unbeliever, when those desires are hindered and frustrated and unfulfilled.

James makes the connection clear in James 4:1 to 2, when he asks, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have, and so you murder." You see the first list going to the second list, "You're envious," envious, driven by greed, "and you cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel."

First list of sins in verse 5, unfulfilled, frustrated leads to the second list in verse 8. Jesus says that all these vices, first and second lists and those are representative because there's other lists too, but all these vices are within a man. They come up from the heart of a man to defile the man. It's what comes from the sinful heart and the sin nature that comes out, out of the lips, out of the behavior, out of the hands, the feet. That's what defiles a man.

Matthew 15:19, Jesus says, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, and murders and adulteries and fornications and thefts and false witness and slanders." This is where what I've referred to as the capstone sin of lying. This is where lying comes in. It provides cover for all this defilement underneath.

According to Romans 2:15, "God has written His law," and that is, we could just say it's summed up in the Decalogue, basically the ten commandments, but "God has written His law on each and every human heart." Not just believers have the law written on their heart, unbelievers too.

Every single human creature has God's law written on the heart and so when people sin, they sense it, they feel it, they understand, and it troubles them. Maybe they can't put it into words, maybe they can't articulate what is going on that's troubling them so much, but they are troubled. Romans 2:15 says, "They demonstrate, therefore, that the work of the law is written in their hearts and their conscience bears witness, and their thoughts are alternately either accusing them or else defending them." And this is where lying comes in.

Since unbelievers, and I hate to have to add this, sadly, but even some professing believers do this; especially maybe those who are less mature or those who are professing believers, but really are not believers. They do this too. Instead of coming clean about their sin, they succumb to the temptation to create their own fig leaf coverings and so they lie.

Rather than telling the truth, they obfuscate, deflect, deceive, counter accuse, shift the blame; all those are tactics

to avoid scrutiny, exposure, truth telling, accountability. But the truth is, they're only hurting themselves in all that deception.

Now for the unbelieving. Obviously these vice lists, this lying, these cover ups, this is life as usual for them. They know nothing different. This is how they survive in the world without God, on their own. This is how they live in a sinful and wretched world. This is how they, they try to cobble together a life and eke out at a spiritual existence because they are troubled.

They're not right with their creator. They know judgment is looming, and so they've got to find a way to work it out. If they're going to continue to reject God, they've got to find a way to work out and live with themselves. This is how they live. They're driven by the list of vices in verse 5 from the inside, and when they are frustrated in getting what they want, they react badly in all the ways that are listed in verse 8.

And when they are caught at times, whether it's by their own conscience that will not let them off the hook, or whether it's by exposure or whether it's by you pointing it out, or whether it's by church discipline, well, then they lie about it, according to verse 9. This is the pattern of sinfulness in the

sinful world, which Paul identified in verse 2, as the things that are on the earth. That's the unbeliever.

For the believers, those who have been raised up with Christ. Believers seek the things above, believers set their mind on the things above, and believers want nothing to do with the things that are here below. And so to help us believers not seek the things below and not put our minds on things below, Paul does three things in this text to motivate us.

First, he commands us. He gives clear directive commands, imperatives in verse 5, verse 8, and verse 9; he commands us. That's a motivation. When he directs a command to our will, to our conscience, we're driven to want to obey. Keep in mind Paul's writing here to believers. Colossians, 1:2, he calls them Saints and faithful brothers in Christ.

And yet at the same time, even while he identifies them positionally, and even by their growing and emerging behavior, he knows the culture they are coming out of. He's walked through these lands. He's walked through the cities. He's seen the people. He knows exactly what they are coming from. He knows the sins that they're prone to commit. He knows how they've been weaned in the culture. He knows that whoever walks into the church walks in with all that culture and all that baggage

dragging behind him and so he gives commands to motivate every command from God.

Every command aimed at a Christian is useful to us, isn't it? To instruct the mind, to activate the affections and then to engage the will. Because the regenerate heart wants to obey God. Those who are born again, they want to walk in the footsteps of their father in heaven. They want to follow their older brother Jesus Christ, do what he did, live as he lived.

That's why these commands of Scripture are so vital. We obey not to be saved. We obey because we are saved. We love to obey, like a tender child loves to obey the command of his parents. Second, to motivate us not to seek the things below, Paul names the sins. Naming the sins is, in and of itself, a motivation. Identifying them for what they really are, that is motivation to depart from them.

The unbelieving, again, sadly to say, along with some professing believers who are sinful, but the unbelieving in particular refuse to see, refuse to identify their sins for what they are. They really like to describe their sins in much softer terms. So it's, it's a fling, it's an affair. It's, it's a passionate romance, little weekend tryst. But God's word says

no, it's sexual immorality and impurity. It's driven by greed and lust and it angers God and it destroys lives.

Unbelievers like to describe sins of the second list as, oh, I'm just, I just got a little frustrated. I just need to vent. Just need to speak my mind. Hey, I'm just being honest or how about this one? Just saying, that's never attached to anything good. No, all that is just. You're using euphemism to cover over wrath, anger and slander and abusive speech from your mouth. And no, it is absolutely destructive, those sins.

Sinners recoil at describing their sins and their lifestyles so clearly. They protest strongly when they are accused of such things. But if anyone should commit any of these offenses against them, they find the language much less objectionable. They actually agree. They see it far more clearly when it's done to them than when they do it to others.

But everyone knows the destruction that these sins cause, which is why everyone senses the need in our time for self-improvement, for becoming a better person, being the best *you* you can be. What everyone will not admit and what they refuse to think long about or deeply about is how they offend a holy God and how there literally is hell to pay.

Now for the believing, when the Bible name sins, when Paul identifies sins, when he calls them what they are so that we see them in all of their ugliness. When we discern how terribly destructive that they are, when we learn about the offence that they are to our God, when we learn how harmful they are to others. For all those who are seeking the things above, we want to be rid of them. We want them gone. We want no connection between these lists and anything, not only just in our actions or our speech, we don't even want them in our minds.

I know from my own experience and I know in talking to other believers, sometimes even when you have a dream, when you commit sin in a dream, you wake up wanting to confess your sins and I say go for it. I know I didn't actually commit a sin in my dream, but just the fact that I'm dreaming sin is an indication of the problem in my heart and I just feel the need compelled to just God forgive me.

Thank you for the gospel that's purified for me from all of that. Wipe it away. So to motivate us not to seek the things below and to help us to put them off, Paul issues commands. He names and identifies the sins as they are. And then third, Paul adds extra reasons, extra motivation to rid our lives of all of these sins and that's what you see following verse 5.

Reasons, explanation in verses 6 and 7, more further motivation and again in the second-half of verse 9 through verse 11, is further motivation, further reasons to put off sinning. So with that very brief introduction, just to this whole section, we're going to proceed today with verses 5 through 7. We're going to do so under two headings, number one and these are your outline points. Number one: What to put to death and number two: What to call to mind. What to put to death, and what to call to mind.

So we look at that list in verse 5. Honestly, every single one of these sins stands at the head of a concept that could get its very own sermon. But rather than a long, full-throated series on hamartiology, I need to discipline myself to tighten this up, stick to the text, keep moving, because Paul's point here is not to give a full orbed hamartiology, the doctrine of sin, but it's to motivate us to rid ourselves of things below. So I'm going to stick to that, okay?

Number one: What to put to death. What to put to death, verse 5, therefore, based on everything in verses 1 to 4, based on "you have died, your life is hidden with Christ and God." Based on you are seeking the things above, you're setting your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth.

"Therefore, in light of that, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry." In the global war on terror, The Defense Intelligence Agency provided a deck of cards to the coalition forces in Iraq and the official name of this deck of cards was something very DIA-ish, Personality Identification Playing Cards; not a good name, rather boring, but it's a very useful tool. Proved to be a very useful tool to help identify the 55 most wanted in Saddam Hussein's regime.

Troops called the deck, Iraqi most wanted and the top card in the deck, the Ace of Spades: Saddam Hussein. A friend of mine that I went through training with is the one who crawled into the hole where Saddam Hussein was hiding and dragged him out of there, arrested him, and apprehended him and handed him over and had to actually spend time with him. He told me that man is pure evil. Glad we went to war there.

Knowing and identifying the opposing threat is so vital in warfare, so effective in eliminating threats. You know every card in that deck was captured or killed by coalition forces. So since mortification of sin is spiritual warfare, it is very important to identify the threat, isn't it?

To be clear about it, Paul wants us to target our sins for termination, and this is not a mission to capture, it is a mission to kill. This is assassination and it is not a black op, this is a sanctioned op. It comes directly from the top. If Paul was to issue a deck of cards to us, the deck would be called, the Members of your Earthly Body and the specific sins that he names all high-ranking targets in the deck of cards.

You may remember from last week, the same expression came in verse 2, "the things that are on the earth." Remember that expression, *ta epi tes ges*? That same expression is actually found here verbatim in verse 5. It's parallel. It starts with ta mele, which is the members, and then, *ta epi tes ges*. So literally the translation is the members of the things that are on the earth.

He said, "don't put your mind on the things that are on the earth." And now let's go after, mortify, kill the members, the things that are on the earth. The word, members, this word actually literally refers to body parts. So our limbs, our legs, our arms, individual parts of the human body.

Obviously here, Paul's using it as a metaphor, but English translations, if you go through and compare Colossians 3 verse 5 in different various translations, you'll find that the English

translations are different in how to give the sense of the metaphor. I think all the translations are trying to avoid giving the wrong impression, that sin, in and of itself, is natural to the human body. That's not true.

When God created us in the very beginning, was there sin attached to us then? If not, it's not natural to the human body. So it's not that the physical body is problematic. We don't want to perpetuate the errors that Paul just addressed and corrected in Colossians 2:23. We don't want to engage in severe treatment of the body.

And there have been figures in church history, like Origin, who actually cut off a member of his body to avoid sinning with it. Grotesque, brutal, and completely antithetical to the text here. That is utterly wrong, but if you just get a survey of the different translations and how they try to render the members of the things that are on the earth, you get an understanding of what they're trying to do and what they're trying to accomplish in their translations.

As we read in the LSB, it's the members of your earthly body. The word body is not in the original for the CSB, for the Christian standard Bible. It's what belongs to your worldly nature. Nature, that's not in the text either and it gives a

false impression. Some people based on a translation of nature, believe that Christians have another nature, leads to this false kind of two nature schizophrenic view of the Christian, as if we have two parallel natures, one new that's created in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit, delivered in the new birth and regeneration.

But then also side by side like some kind of a yin and Yang thing and a dark and light kind of a thing. Some Christians have believed based on this, said they have also along with a new nature, the old nature is still there and it's competing and they're wrestling with each other. It's kind of this dualistic view of the inner man.

Listen, the biblical teaching is the Christian has one nature, that's it, and it's a new nature. What some have called the old nature is more accurately identified in verse 9, as the old man. That's the literal rendering of the original, and it does not use the word nature, which is *phusis*, but the word *anthrōpos,* which is man. That old man was put to death in Christ, and as the text says, he has been castaway, been put off. The ESV translation says, "Put to death, therefore what is earthly in you."

The new English translation, whatever in your nature belongs to the earth, at risks the same misconstruing as the CSB. The winner in my book is the good old King James Version of the Bible. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Mortify, therefore, your members, which are upon the earth. I like that picture because it gives this concept, as you can imagine, of some kind of a monstrous growth on the body, big, ugly, grotesque, some abnormal appendage, like growing out of our torso, sticking out. It causes pain because it keeps getting caught on things.

It's a deformity. It's like another limb that's growing out of our trunk and getting in the way of our legs and tripping us up, so it needs to be removed and cut off and, and flung far, far away from us. Again, the metaphor is providing a picture here. Paul is not Speaking of a problem with the physical body. It's physical body parts. He's portraying sin, in pictures, in a metaphor as abnormal parts, as deformed limbs that are festering and toxic and cancerous and they need to be cut off and removed.

I think the King James Version scores another point for using the coolest word ever for the concept of killing our sin, which is mortify. Mortification of sin, isn't that a cool name? You should use it. You should use it, and you should use it in

public. So people are like, morta-what? And then you can explain.

We're going to come back to how we're supposed to kill or mortify our sins in just a bit. But first, let's start through the deck of cards and we'll go from the top, the aces and one of the kings, the king of spades in verse 5. And after we go through that, after we clearly identify our targets at the top of the deck, we'll learn what it means to kill or mortify or put them to death.

First in verse 5, working through the list, the king of spades; What is it that ruins kings and their kingdoms that they rule? Sexual immorality, one of the things, but sexual immorality is the king of spades in the deck. And the word is *porneia*. And we're working from the king of spades and we're going to go up through the aces, because as Paul goes through this list, he starts with, yes, what's defiling, but it's really the most important one is at the end.

The one that drives all the others is the greed, which is idolatry. It drives everything else. That's going to be the ace of spades, but we'll get there in a moment. The king of spades. Sexual immorality. The word is *porneia*. That's the main word in the New Testament for any and all sexual immorality.

Fornication, adultery, pornography, masturbation, which is also a sin, prostitution, homosexuality, either kind of homosexual, any kind of transgender, transsexual, bestiality, all these different sins.

Vile sin lists in the Old Testament. The practice of idol worshipping nations, all that stuff, any of it individually, all of it collectively, *porneia.* Any extramarital sexual activity, every unlawful, out of wedlock sexual thought, imagination, action or behavior, if it is not conducted within the bonds of holy matrimony within marriage, God condemns this as *porneia*. It is forbidden. It is utterly ruinous.

Sexual immorality destroys families. It shreds marriages. It corrupts the generations that have to live through the wreckage of it. And some today are under the delusion, well, that if it's done in the privacy of my own home and not with another person. So if it's pornography on the Internet, that's a victimless crime. Oh, yeah. You know how many of those people who are being watched are trafficked, they're captured and they're drugged and they're made to do all kinds of vile, immoral things for the pleasure of voyeurs watching on the Internet. It's absolute filth, and you're participating in that.

It is not a victimless crime, not only that, but anybody who participates in that sin is sinning against his own body or her own body. You turn into a shell of a person, it erodes your confidence, and you walk in with your head hanging low because you can't look anybody in the eye. It's defiling, it's corrupt, and it does affect when you are rendered ineffective. When you walk into the church, you're rendered ineffective to serve the members of the body.

So yes, that private sin you think is anonymous and done in the privacy of your own home, never to be exposed, only seen by God, shows a lack of the fear of God and you know it. And when you walk in, you can't serve here. You feel it. You know your conscience is guilty. You feel the shame. And I just want to say that if anybody struggles with that, you need to come and talk to us. We'll help you. We've helped so many. We will help you too.

God shows mercy to those who confess their sins and forsake. The elders were meeting this week. We had a conversation, two of our older elders, and I'll leave it to you to figure out which elders I'm talking about when I say that. But two of our older elders were talking about how when they were growing up, they didn't know any divorced people. Very few.

If there was someone divorced in their community, that person stood out.

Maybe one divorcee and their parents had to explain to them what divorce meant, because it was such an oddity, such a strange and foreign concept. But today divorce is so rampant and so commonplace, it's really hard to find kids who know what it is to grow up in a two-parent family. Seems shocking to find kids who grow up in two parent households. And I have to say it like this and to add that where dad is a man and mom is a woman.

In fact, as I've talked with teachers in our congregation and teachers in other places, I've discovered how rare it is for them to find kids who are in their classrooms who grow up in homes that are not blended. Mom's new partner, dad's new girlfriend, each one dragging a gaggle of kids in that are born into previous relationships into the current relationships. And so it's just a mix of all kinds of relationships and all weakened and attenuated by lack of blood connection.

It's tragic and I'm not putting anyone down when I say all this. I don't intend to make anyone feel uncomfortable or less than, because the Scripture makes us uncomfortable enough with all of our sin. But I just, I want you to know, I sympathize. I feel compassion for those whose lives have been shattered by

divorce and ruined by sexual immorality. Divorce destroys and often due to sexual immorality that's lurking in the darkness. Listen, sexual sin is not innocent fun. It's not a victimless crime. It causes defilement and for generations to come. And so we come to a next point. Second, the ace of clubs.

The ace of clubs, the sin of impurity. Sin of impurity. When kids grow up in these blended families, especially the young, they're vulnerable to the sins of sexual immorality that's being, may be, perpetrated upon them by step brothers, step sisters, babysitters, babysitters boyfriends, all manner of corruption.

And then when kids are abused and kids who have to witness the sexual morality of the lives of the moms and dads above them, that impurity passes on from one generation to the next and becomes even more vile, even more defiling, degrading, impure. Young boys grow up seeking sexual experiences. And when they've been abused, their sexual experiences are often perverted and twisted. And they find pornography, which these days is finding them. And sex drives are ignited far too early, so early, when these boys have no self-control, they're easily enslaved to their lusts.

Young girls who've been abused tend to be utterly frightened of sex and it's no small wonder, when some try to avoid men and gravitate towards softer women, engage in the sin of lesbianism. Some come to believe, sadly and so wrongly, they think they can protect themselves from hurt by finding refuge with another woman. And that is such a lie.

In every homosexual and lesbian relationship that I have had to counsel or to get into and try to help people out of, there is devastating, hurt, devastating. All of this is impurity. *Akatharsia* takes the word clean, *katharos* so you can hear the word cathartic, clean, and it negates that word with an alpha predative, *akatharsia* uncleanness, impurity, defilement, and the most basic, the most literal sense of the word. It just means filth or waste.

When it's used, the word is used to describe a grave. It means decayed flesh. And that's why among the holiness laws of Israel you didn't touch a dead body. You didn't get involved in a grave detail before some holy feast or some holy thing, because it would cause you to be defiled and unclean and ritually, ceremonially impure.

But figuratively, when we take what we can all see is defilement, things are rotting, decaying, filthy, putrid,

stinking. Take that literal visual, physical imagery and then transfer that into the moral realm. And that's what Paul is speaking of here. In this context, clearly refers to sexual indecency, defiling, degrading aspects of filthy practices that are really too vile to speak about in public.

I've talked to some doctors who have had to come in after when there's some kind of a defiling thing that's happened between men, women, heterosexual, homosexual couples, and it's just too vile to speak about. But impurity is the right word, defiling. Usually the ace of diamonds would come next in the order and then the ace of hearts. But considering the list of sins, we have to invert the order. Obviously, the ace of hearts is the sin of passion and the ace of diamonds evil desire.

Third, the ace of hearts, passion. The word is *pathos*. *Pathos*, some people pronounce it and *pathos* has two senses. One refers to suffering and you can hear that in the paschal lamb, the suffering lamb. But the other side is referring to strong unchecked emotion. So pathos is what responds to something, it responds to some stimulus, and it comes out in what can't be controlled. So on the one hand, suffering, weeping can't be controlled, and pain and suffering can't be controlled, when you're stabbed or when you're hurt, when you're persecuted.

And on the other side, when there's a provocation or a lust or an image or a person, that passion just runs wild. That's the idea here in the New Testament. Passion like that is in the sense of an unchecked undisciplined emotion and especially in context like this one, it's used to convey evil desire or a sinful craving. It's sexual in nature. Lustful desire is a good translation or uncontrolled sexual passion or an evil craving.

If you have your Bible, you can turn over to Romans chapter 1. I am going to have a few cross references, so I would just encourage you to follow me along to the cross references, because I want your eyes to look at the text and I want you to see in the text what will inform your mind and your conscience. So follow along in these crossed references. Romans chapter 1, verse 24, "It's because of idolatry, spiritual idolatry, departing from God that God." "Therefore," verse 24, "Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them."

Skip to verse 26. "For this reason, God gave them over to dishonorable passions." Again, well, what's written in verse 25? Let's read it. "It's they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who's blessed forever. Amen." What is that? That's idolatry.

Because of idolatry, God hands them over to sexual lust and sin. Verse 26, "For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For their females exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the males abandoned the natural function of the female, and burned in their desire toward one another. Males of males committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

In verse 24, the word epithymia, lust, which comes next in the deck of cards, but it's joined *akatharsia*, impurity, and then in verse 26, degrading passions and the word there, *pathos*, that's the word. 1 Thessalonians 4:4 and 5, you don't even turn there, but Paul tells that church, young church, emerging from the native soil of pagan immorality, each of you need to know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion like Gentiles who do not know God.

So we're going through the deck, knocking them down. Sexual morality, impurity, passion, then next fourth, the ace of diamonds, which is evil desire. Evil desire. The words are *epithymia*, which is desire or lust and then *kakos. Kakos*, which is evil, bad. The word, *epithymia* can actually stand alone by itself and convey lustful cravings and evil desires,

unrestrained desires for what's forbidden, which Paul wrote of in Romans 2:26 and 27.

So when Paul adds the word, evil, to the adjective, kakos to the word, *epithymia*, he is strengthening the sense. He's adding further emphasis. He uses a very similar strengthened emphasis for the word, *epithymia* in Galatians 5:16, but instead of using the word evil to describe the *epithymia*, he substitutes the word flesh, *sarx*, which is a theological synonym.

He warns them not to carry out the desires of the flesh, and then he proceeds in verse 19, Galatians chapter 5. You can turn there to Galatians 5:19, he can, he proceeds with another list of vices which are very similar to this one. "The deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality," Verse 20, "idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you. Just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

In 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul commands his pastoral protege, the younger man, Timothy, he tells him there to, "flee youthful lusts," says that to a pastor. Important to take note of that.

And Paul intends in speaking to Timothy about fleeing youthful lust. He intends to expand the concept of lust, desire from sexual immorality only, and he wants to expand it to all that opposes what he describes in verse 22, what opposes righteousness, faith, love and peace.

So *epithymia* isn't sexual in nature only according to 2 Timothy 2:22, but it is that which is unrighteous, that which is unfaithful, that which is not loving, that which is not peaceful, and gets the young man into what Paul warns against in 2 Timothy 2:23. He says "refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels." Sounds like James 4:1 and 2, doesn't it? "The Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach and patient when wronged."

Evil desire, lusts, they oppose righteousness, they lead to all kinds of unrighteousness. They oppose faith, they lead to doubt and unbelieving. Instead of love, it's self-love. Instead of peace, it's war and quarreling and fighting. That's why Paul tells Pastor Timothy, listen of all young men, Timothy, being put into the position of leading people is going to provoke all manner of lust inside of you, not just sexual, but desires, evil

desires to get even, to prove your case, to defend yourself, to shout when you ought to be silent.

And you as a Pastor, Timothy, you need to set yourself as an example of righteousness and faith and love and peace. You can't strike back when they strike at you. When sinners come and sin against you and it draws out your sin, you have to be a man not driven by his lusts, not driven by his passions, but you need to be a man who steps back and takes a breath and prays rather than fights.

Evil lusts are not only sexual in nature, but sexual immorality is the predominant, most apparent expression of evil desire. Unbridled evil desires lead to foolish, ignorant speculations, which are very prominent among the young. Quarreling, quibbling, fighting, arguing, impatience when treated unjustly, when wronged by someone else, defensive, want to go to blows. So flee youthful lusts, all of them. All youthful lusts and the evil lust, especially of sexual immorality and the impurity of this age.

Finally number five, we come to the ace of spades, the highest card in the deck. It's the sin of greed or covetousness. Avarice is another term. There's a parallel over in Ephesians that clarifies this, where Paul says in Ephesians 4:19, that the

Gentiles, they've given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity, and then this with greediness.

The CSB, the Christian Standard Bible, says, "They give themselves over to the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more." That's greed. It's an insatiable desire. Why? Because sin doesn't satisfy. And when you sit at this level, in order to get the same buzz, you have to sit at this level. And then when that no longer works, you have to go higher, still deeper, still more defiling, more impure.

We call it gateway sins, they lead to total enslavement of the mind, the life, the character. It's all driven by greed, covetousness, the desire for more and more. Paul adds a relative clause to the word greed, he says, "which is idolatry." It's the very character of idolatry, worshipping an idol, which is nothing. It will not satisfy. An idol can't deliver on what it promises. Jeremiah said it this way, you've forsaken the fountain of living waters, and you've given yourselves over to vessels that can hold no water. You worship idols that can't deliver.

They have no mouths to speak, ears to hear, can't hear your prayers, can't speak anything into existence. They have no

power. That's why this insatiable character of greed, the fact that covetous desire is never satisfied, is tied to the very nature of idolatry, because idols, they offer false hopes, they deceive with false promises, because they are nothing, they have nothing, they deliver nothing and so the idolater keeps seeking more and more.

The greedy, idolatrous heart longs for the idols to satisfy the innermost cravings, but they cannot, because idols are nothing but deadwood, hard stone, lifeless, empty. And it's really in that final form, idolatry. Greed, which is idolatry; covetous, which is idolatry. Coveting, desire and idolatrous worship are really of a piece and it really does point the way back, doesn't it? Because if the ace of spades is greed, which is idolatry.

If the ace of spades in the deck, the Saddam Hussein in the list of sins, and ourselves the most controlling, determinative force in us is covetous desire, which is idolatry, well then we know the way back, don't we? Cut down all idols, crush them into pieces like Moses did with the golden calf. Crush it into powder and pour it into the brook. Get rid of it.

John Calvin said, "Our hearts are like idol factories, just pumping out more and more things to worship, serve,

pursue." So every time something's pumped out, you just take a big hammer and smash it, because the way back is worship. The way back is satisfaction in your God. The way back is Christ and his righteousness. The way back is the purity of God and his truth. It's the love and the worship of God that will lead us back.

The five vices, those are what we must put to death, though, every time they come up. Every time we see them, every time there's a hint, we got to pursue it, track it down and execute. So let's talk about this issue of executing, terminating sin. Let's talk about mortification. *Nekroō* is the verb. You can hear necro, necromancy is associated with death, but that's the verb. *Nekroō* translated, variously, as consider as dead or kill or mortify, put to death. What does this mean? What does it mean to kill sin? How do you put something as intangible as a thought to death.

When you think carefully about it, when you meditate on the picture of a member that needs to be killed, destroyed, reflect on what it means to kill something; Paul has used the perfect metaphor to teach us what to do with the sin that is troubling us. Here's how John Owen explained it, "To kill a man or any other living thing is to take away the principle of all his

strength, vigor, and power, so that he cannot act or exert or put forth any proper actings of his own. The mortification of indwelling sin remaining in our mortal bodies means that sin may not have a life and power to bring forth the works or the deeds of the flesh." That's what it is to kill a sin, choke it, take

away its life source. To kill a sin, to mortify, to put it to death, to take out the aces and the kings in the deck of cards. It means to choke the life out of them, starve them of their breath, their life, their food. Don't feed them. Render the thoughts and the attitudes and the desires, therefore, as ineffective, powerless, inept, unable to have any influence on you.

So when we starve, sin, when we refuse to feed it, give it water to drink, air to breathe, we choke it out and we find this sexual immorality has no life. Impurity is removed, passions and emotions are restrained and put under control, put into shackles and bonds to be used for good.

Evil desires then are not fed, but starved and cries of the covetousness and greed inside reduced to a whimper and then go silent. Galatians 5:16-17 says, "But I say," you ask, how do you do this? Galatians 5:16-17 answers, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh."

It's a positive. The best defense here is offense. Walk by the spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are in opposition to one another.

So pursue the life of the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, occupy yourself with the things of the Spirit. Let the Word of God, which the Spirit himself authored, let that dwell richly within you. Crowd out other thoughts. Be sure your time and your energy gives first place to things of the Spirit. Word of God, prayer, loving, serving others, doing the one and others of the church, sacrificing yourself for the good of other people. Give, give, give, serve, serve, serve, and I'm not just talking about busy yourself to the point of distraction. I'm talking about genuine Christian service that is driven by love from God, by the fruit of the Spirit.

Because you are saturated with the Word of God and you have choked out any ground and robbed it of any nutrient that would feed sexual immorality and impurity and evil desire and greed and pathos, passion. When you occupy your time walking by the Spirit, the flesh has no power. You choke sinful desire and fleshly ambition. You rob them of air. You step on the air hose, cut off their life so they have no power to influence you.

That's what it means to put to death the members of your earthly body, the members that are upon the earth. Take away the principle of all of its strength, its vigor, its power, so that these abnormal appendages and these vile deformities, they cannot act or exert or act on their own. For every single one of these sins, it has its own air supply, its own food source and part of growing in wisdom and maturity as a Christian is to discover what that air source is, where it's found, what the food is, what you are unwittingly feeding it, and go in and take away the food. Cut off the air. It's part of sanctification.

So give your mind, beloved, to the life of the Spirit, and let the Spirit then grow your affections for God. Give yourself to true worship, not to idolatry, because idolatry and covetousness go hand in hand. They feed each other. Give your will a heavenly ambition so that you seek the things above. Let your heart, your mind, will, and affections be occupied by the Spirit. When you do, the life of the spirit will suffocate the desires of the flesh, and you will have no time, no energy, and no ambition remaining to gratify the flesh.

Obviously, there's so much more to learn, but we don't want to stop and do a hamartiology series. We want to keep moving and follow Paul's motivations here. I trust that you know, older,

wiser, more mature Christians who can give you some practical tips on how to work this out in your life. And I hope that you will do that. And I hope young men, young women, young Christians, you will do that. Don't be too proud to come near for help. That's what older Christians who've been down the path ahead of you, who've actually put these disciplines and self-control into effect in their lives and practicing their lives, that's what they're there for.

I read out of Titus 2 for our Scripture reading with that intent in mind. So you can see older men and older women are to teach the younger and you younger people, you are to seek us out. Don't wait for us to come to you. We will like to come to you, but we cannot read your minds. So come ask, we'll help. We love you. We love you.

Time for one more point number two, what to call to mind to motivate us further to kill sin, put off sin, start working through the deck of cards. Paul adds some compelling reasons as to why we ought to put our sins to death in verses 6 and 7. "On account of these things," he says, "The wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked when you were living in them."

So several reasons that Paul adds, to compel us, to motivate us to kill sin in our life. First reason: To target these sins is that God targets these sins. Paul says, "It's on account of these things that the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience." In some copies of God's word that you may have in your possession, there may be a text note that says correctly, I believe, the phrase, "upon the sons of disobedience" is not original to this text. That's true.

I believe it comes from Ephesians 5:6 where it says, "Because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience," sounds exactly similar to Colossians 3:6, doesn't it? But the addition, I believe, into Colossians is from an overzealous cross-referencing scribe, who just was writing down notes and then it actually got incorporated early into the text. The most reliable textual witnesses don't have it. And so you're free to find that text, which is really good, find in Ephesians 5:6, not here in Colossians 3:6.

Nevertheless, the fact that because of these things, the wrath of God comes gives us a theological reason to mortify our own sins. God is holy, and he hates all sin and his wrath, here the word is *orgē*, which shows up again in verse 8. There, in

contrast to *thumos. Thumos* is more like an outburst of anger in reference to God.

In particular, *orge* refers to a settled indignation. God's wrath over sin is not like a human passion that rises and falls, it's mutable, that is ever changing. God's wrath does not change, it is a fixed, settled, immutable disposition of his immutable essence. His displeasure over all sin, hatred of all that offends his holiness, his wrath for all that defies his goodness and hurts his children.

For the moment, in the world, God's wrath is held fast behind the dam of his merciful patience, behind the dam of his sovereign timing, as he gives sinners time and opportunity to repent and believe the gospel. But there will come a day, as Ephesians 6 says, the dam will burst and God's wrath will pour out on the disobedient. Paul says there, "This you know with certainty that no sexually immoral person, no impure or greedy person who's an idolater has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

How significantly the Scripture exceeds our culture, in its pursuit of holiness and purity, in its sobriety about sin

and righteousness. Doug Moo, one of the commentators, who wrote about these vice lists in Scripture, and he says this, "The vice lists in Scripture differ in this respect from counterparts in the larger Greek world, which were concerned simply to foster moral improvement."

Boy, so true of our day, isn't it? Everybody's trying to become a better you, a better self, a better version of themselves. Moo goes on to say in the New Testament, "in contrast, the vice lists function to depict the lifestyle of people who are in enmity with the holy God of the Bible and thus suffer eternal condemnation."

It's not just that they're stumbling and falling and they're victims of their own good looks, that they just keep running into sexual immorality. No, it's because they are fundamentally at enmity with God. They're enemies of God, and this behavior that comes out of them is an evidence of their enmity with God and God will destroy both the sin and the sinner when he judges and sends to hell.

Doug Moo goes on to say, "The vices are therefore elevated to a whole new level of seriousness." Listen, God targets sins. Sinners need to know that, the gospel of self-improvement, to become the best versions of ourselves, to do better, to make

ourselves proud of ourselves, always telling our children just make a better choice. I won't even get into the kind of enslavement that that kind of moralism is to the sinner.

People can't just be better, that's enslavement. That's what Martin Luther was going through, when he's crawling up the steps, kissing everyone and going through the rosary. All those self-improvement tactics are all the world has to offer. They cannot sanctify, but God offers salvation from his own wrath against our sin and that wrath is coming, verse 6.

Second reason that you want to target these sins is you know why God targets these sins and you agree with them. Paul says, "In them," that is in these sins, "you also once walked when you were living in them." instead of you, also, it's probably even an emphatic here; you yourselves, you yourselves used to walk in these. So you all understand, you've come to know, because you've experienced this.

You've walked in it as regards behavior. You've lived in that filth as referring to lifestyle. You see why God hates sin. You know why his wrath comes in judgement. Because sin that you participated in is so defiling, so degrading, troubles your conscience, fills you with shame and destroys lives, breaks relationships, disunifies, it hurts.

Let your agreement with God over the sinfulness of sin, the badness of wickedness, the degradation of defilement, and the absolute affront to the beauty of God's holiness and his goodness. Let your agreement with God motivate you to put these sins to death and to rid your life of them. That's motivation number two.

There's a third reason to target these sins. You're now on God's side, you walk with him, you share in his life, and so you love doing as he does, as your father does. You love what he loves and you also hate what he hates. You're now jealous and you grow in jealousy for his holiness, his reputation. And this little point comes from a little word, but such a joy producing word in these sins, verse 7, "you *once* walked." Isn't that good news?

The gospel, in the word, Greek word, *pote*, once. "You once walked in these," that used to be your condition, your character, your habitual practice, when you lived in all those sins, but no more, no more, beloved. You once were involved in the vilest of vile sins. But then something changed. Paul said the same thing to the Corinthians in another vice list.

He says this in 1 Corinthians 6 verses 9 and following. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom

of God? Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals." That's talking about the male female partner in a homosexual, male homosexual relationship. The effeminate on the one hand, the homosexual, the male role on the other. "nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God." And then this, "Such were some of you."

Such *were* some of you Christians, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, declared righteous in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the spirit of our God. That's such good news, isn't it? Such good news. It's what Paul said in Titus chapter 3, "We ourselves also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures. We spent our life in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another." But then something happened. God intervened, "the kindness and affection of God our Savior, appeared and he saved us not by works that we did in righteousness, but according to His mercy through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit."

Good news, beloved, be motivated. Be motivated to drive after your sins and put them to death, to kill them, to mortify

them. Take out that deck of cards and realize that God targets your sins, and so should you. And you agree with God that these sins are vile and worthy of death. And then realize, oh, wait a minute, I'm on God's side. I'm now under the grace of God. So consider this whole section, Colossians 3:5 through 11, as kind of like God's target package and he's giving it to you. He saying come on in, let me bring you into the briefing room. Let me open up the target package. Let me show you who these targets are, what they look like, what characterizes them, where they get their food, where they get their supply, who's supplying them, what needs to be done. Let me bring you into this.

You can go out as my special operative and kill sin. So cool. You get to go on a sanction, seek and destroy mission, target your sin, kill it. Because we always want to remember what John Owen so famously said, "Be killing sin or sin will be killing you." There's no neutrality out there, he says, "There's not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed on, and it'll be so while we live in this world."

So "be killing sin or sin will be killing you." Get after it, folks. Pull out that deck of cards, Christianity's most wanted, and go, get to work. God's on your side. He's given you the authority of Christ to kill and the ability by the Spirit,

the weapons of our warfare. They're not carnal, but they're mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Kill sin. You have the ability and you have the desire and the new nature to join him in targeting and killing sin. And as I said, this is a sanctioned operation. So put your sin in the crosshairs; take aim at that target and with a slow, steady trigger pull, execute, assassinate your sin. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you that you have not only declared us righteous, justifying us by faith, because of your grace, because of your mercy to us in Christ, but in addition to that, you don't leave us in the muck of our sins, but you not only empower us and strengthen us and give us the model in Christ of how to turn away from sin and give us the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, but you give your Word. We have the intelligence briefing from you, from the Scripture. We're brought into the briefing room. You yourself teach us by the Spirit. You instruct us through the Word.

We pray that You would work in every single life here to motivate them to get on with the work of sanctification, their

own part in killing sin. And father, I pray that there would be no one who hears this kind of a message who would leave this place unchanged. But I know just through experience that there are people who will walk out of here unchanged, and they will do nothing to change their lives. They'll continue on as they were, stealing themselves in their pride, stiffening their neck, hardening in their hearts.

And so father, I pray for just as an expression of your mercy and your love and your saving grace, knowing I was once a hard-hearted, stiff-necked sinner like that, hearing messages like this one walking away unchanged. But you were kind to me. You broke my heart and I pray that you would do the same for any hard-hearted sinner here, that you would not let them be unchanged, but that you would extend your mercy, that you would loosen their neck, soften their heart, give them eyes to see and ears to hear, and a heart that will believe and understand. And I pray for all those who are here who are soft hearted Christians with sensitive, tender consciences.

Well, father, will you encourage them in this fight. Let them know about the great power of the side that they are now enlisted into the armies of the Lord of hosts. They stand shoulder to shoulder with angels, with Christ himself as the

victor at the head of the army. And these sins in the deck of cards, they will be captured and killed to your glory.

In the name of Jesus Christ, will you motivate us, all of us, your true people, will you help us to pursue the sins in our lives. And as we go through this section, please help us to be a markedly different people from the rest of the world so that this gospel that we proclaim and the doctrines that we hold to and the theology that we do love and adhere to would be put on display and change lives. Please sanctify us by your truth. Your word is truth. We love you, Father. We thank you for your help. In Christ's name, Amen.