

Colossians 3:5—11

November 3, 2019

I am going to ask you a demanding and challenging question.

Who are you?

Three simple little words, mask a severe complexity.

Who are you?

How do you respond?

Would you say—

I am a wife and mother who enjoys good food, good company and good conversation.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I am an engineer. I have worked at Intel for the last 2 ½ decades and I am now looking forward to retirement.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I am an inquisitive person who consumes information. I enjoy reading, podcasts and documentaries.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I am a disappointment. I've never really amounted to anything and seem to fall short at everything.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I am a sophomore in college majoring in English literature. I have a major paper due Thursday next.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I am an active person who likes to hike, run and bike.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I am person who loves to travel to experience new cultures, unfamiliar food and varied climates.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I don't know who I am supposed to be. I don't fit in anywhere I go and often feel like a stranger in my own home.

Who are you?

Would you say—

I am a student.

I am a retiree.

I am an Arizonan.

I am a husband.

I am a mother.

I am an American.

I am a wife.

I am an executive.

I am a seeker.

I am a Democrat.

I am a Republican.

I am a survivor.

Who are you?

Our passage today is going to help us answer that question. The scriptures and the Holy Spirit are going to help us push past typical and surface responses to Who are you—to the crux of who you are.

We need to know the answer to that question. You must have a firm handle on your identity or you will never be able to answer the question—Who am I?

And if you can't answer the question—Who am I? You will not understand what you are to be or what you are to give your life to.

We will discover the answer to our question this morning as we consider Colossians 3:5-11. If you listen and pay attention you will hear the answer. If I were to answer, "Who are you?" in one sentence it would be—

PROP: We are already NEW people being renewed.

If you follow Jesus you are a NEW person being renewed. You aren't going to look new—you have the same dimples, limp, hair color and teeth—but you ARE new BEING renewed.

I'm going to read beginning in chapter 3 verse 1 for a bit of context and to see the connection from the first few verses to our passage today. If you missed it,

listen to or read Jim Hubek's excellent sermon
Colossians 3:1-4.

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." Colossians 3:1-11

PRAY

We are already NEW people being renewed.

Do you see where I got that from? Look again at verse 9,

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Christian—who are you? You already NEW people being renewed. We heard last week and read this morning that we died with Jesus and have been raised with Jesus.

We are in Jesus—already NEW being renewed.

What does it look like to be NEW being renewed?

We kill

We purge

We bind

1. We Kill (Col. 3:5-7)

We are to be cold-blooded killers. Of sin sexual sin.

Did you see that in verse 5?

Vs. 5,

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

The only reason that we can execute sin—even entangling and debilitating sexual sin is because we have died with Christ, rose with Christ and now we live in Christ.

We need to get that order correct. Colossians has spoken to us for two whole chapters about who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

Though you were alienated; Jesus reconciled you.
Though you were guilty; Jesus canceled your record of sin.

Though you were dead; Jesus made you alive.

And because you are alive and in Christ—because you are already NEW—execute sexual sin.

An old pastor once said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

This is especially true with sexual sin. The reason that Paul shines a spotlight on sexual sin is because for

many people it is an identity issue. Our identities are shaped by our sexuality. People can wrongly assume that we are who we sleep with. Or we are who sleeps with us.

That is patently false.

Instead as people already NEW being RENEWED—we no longer have to be subject and enslaved to sexual sin. The power of Jesus impacts our most personal and intimate area of our lives.

There is no area off limits to Jesus.

What are we to kill? Paul stacks up 5 descriptors

Vs. 5, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

God created all things and he created sexual intercourse as a gift between one man and women within the covenant of marriage. Sex is not bad or evil or dirty. God has made us sexual creatures. But sex is one of those things that we humans are most apt to get wrong.

We Christians are already NEW being RENEWED—what sexual sins are we to kill?

sexual immorality: This is a catch-all category for any sexual activity outside the marriage bed between one man and one woman. The Bible is clear. Sex is reserved for one man and one woman in the covenant of marriage. Anything else is sexual immorality.

Impurity: This is another big category that refers to any kind of sexual activity outside marriage.

Lest you think that the only kind of sexual sin is physical—think again. In fact the next three descriptors describe misplaced sexual desires.

Passion: This could be rendered lust. It is wanting someone sexually who is not yours to have.

evil desire: Very similar to lust. Wanting someone or something sexually that is not yours to have.

covetousness: This is an unsuitable desire for someone different than your spouse.

The key word in verse five is the last one—

Vs. 5, **“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.**”

The root of any and all sexual sin is idolatry. Idolatry is not the worship of statues and idols. Idolatry is the worship of anyone or anything that is not God. We are to have no other gods before our God.

Do you see what this means?

The root of sexual sin is idolatry. Sexual sin is the worship of pleasure or power or intimacy—but not God. Understand this—anyone who lives a life of sexual immorality is not worshipping God.

But we Christians are already new. We have the power to be killers of sexual sin. We are not subject to its power anymore. We need not obey its passions and desires.

We are in Christ.

What if you sit here today and find the Holy Spirit convicting you of some sort of sexual sin. What are you to do?

Pray about what to do? No.

Kill it.

Execute it.

I'm not saying that it is easy but I am saying you have access to a new power if you are in Christ. We would never be commanded to kill sin if we could not actually do it.

There is shame associated with sexual sin.

What if you are not a Christian?

I want you to especially listen carefully. Salvation does not come through proper sexual ethics. I'm NOT saying—live sexually righteous. I'm saying—come to Jesus and he will give you the power to change even your sex life.

Salvation comes by Jesus and Jesus alone. Don't think you can just change your sexual behavior and have Jesus be pleased with you.

You need Jesus to make you alive so you can have the power to change.

We are in Jesus—already NEW being renewed.

What does it look like to be NEW being renewed?

We kill sexual sin and

2. We purge (Col. 3:8-10)

We purge evil speech. Isn't it interesting that Paul highlights sex and speech. Two things that are not bad but that we are most apt to twist and pervert.

Sex is for enjoyment in marriage.
Speech is for—what?

For—

Speaking truth and building others up.
Expressing thankfulness and worshiping God.
Rejoicing and exulting in Jesus Christ.

If that is what our speech is for—

What are we to purge?

⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

What are we to put away, to purge from our lives?

All angry speech.
All wrathful speech.
All speech spiked with malice.
All slanderous speech.
All obscene speech.

Sexual sin is easy to spot and is often accompanied by shame and secrecy. In these days, sins of speech do not have the same level of shame.

We must purge ALL evil speech.

We simply don't have the right to use our speech to spread our anger to anyone else. It is natural and expected to get angry but we must purge the impulse to spread that anger with our words. But we have no right. Not now, not ever. Does your mouth give voice to thanksgiving or anger?

If so, purge the anger.

We must purge the impulse to express wrath toward others by saying what punishment you think they deserve. We have no right to express judgment about anyone else. Not now, not ever. Does your mouth give voice to encouragement or wrathful speech?

If so, purge the wrath.

We must purge malice—the desire to harm others or “put them in their place” with our words. We have no right to express malice toward any other person. Not now, not ever. Does your mouth give voice to kindness toward others or malicious speech?

If so, purge the malice.

We must purge slander from our mouths. We do not have the right to spread reports that defame others. We have no cause to use our words to denigrate other people in any form. Not now, not ever. Does your mouth give voice to love toward others or slanderous speech?

If so, purge the slander.

We must purge obscene talk from our mouths. This is not so much the expression of what we might think of as foul language but it obscene talk is that that belittles other people. We have no cause to use our words to make anyone else feel small. Not now, not ever. Does your give voice to grace toward others or obscenities?

Because we are NEW being RENEWED we must act in concert with our new natures by putting away and purging all remnants of evil speech.

Understand this: Paul is not saying that there is no place for anger at “sin or injustice or cruelty.” There is. Sin and injustice and cruelty are things that SHOULD make us angry. There are times that we must warn other people of liars, fools and slanderers. Sometimes godly speech mandates that we speak out and warn others. When we warn others we have no right to denigrate them personally just speak to the content of their speech.

How is the content of your speech?

You might be a person who never utters a curse word and yet have a foul mouth. Scripture is far more concerned with what we say about and to others than if we say a bad word.

Surely, all of us have patterns to put away and purge in what comes out of our mouths. God has made us creatures that speak. The answer is not to stop speaking but to use our mouths to point others toward him.

Sitting here you might think—this list of things about my speech is overwhelming. And on top of all that verse 9 gives us one more direction—“do not lie to one another...”

It can feel like Paul is distilling the Christian life down to a list things to avoid. Sam Storms expresses a sentiment you might feel.

"Put to death sexual immorality. Avoid covetousness. Stop lying. Do this. Don't do that. Taboos. Prohibitions. Commandments. Rules. Enough already!"
Sam Storms

Oh but we need to look closely here. We do not gain Christ by avoiding bad things and doing good things. We cannot gain salvation based on our speech or actions.

The reason we can kill sexual immorality AND purge evil speech is because of what we read in verse 10,

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

The reason you can kill and purge is because you have already put on the 'new self.' When you began to trust Jesus you put on the new self—or another way to say it is this—you became a new person.

You are different.
You are regenerated.

You are forgiven.
You are reconciled.
You are new.

Here is the idea—you have already put off the old self in the past—continue to kill and purge practices that were associated with your old self. The break with our old self has already happened in the past.

When we hear,

seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

We must think—that is a work done. I have been made new. The call here is for us to give up that old self and some of the old practices and habits from our past.

Continue to be who you are.

But there is more to notice here in verse 10. Look again at it—

and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Notice that the text does not say, “Which you are to renew in the knowledge after the image of its creator.” No, the idea here is that we do not and cannot renew ourselves but we are renewed by another. He is the power and the strength behind our renewal. We are being renewed by him after his image.

Do you see that?

Our renewal is possible because we work in partnership with him. This is important to understand.

At conversion we become a new creation. Our lives are hidden with Christ. We are seated with him in the heavenly places. We have died and rose with Christ.

This is all true—but it is invisible.

Because we are converted we can kill and purge sin that we never could have before. The picture here in col 3 is not moral reformation. A process of becoming different by his power and strength.

There are two extremes here to avoid.

One is Quietism another is Solitude.

Quietism is the disposition that we don't have to do much work in partnership with Jesus. We can be passive and "Let go and let God." No.

What does our passage say?

We must kill sexual sin

We must purge sin of speech

This takes determination. This takes action. This takes hard work. This takes—sometimes—radical action. If you sit around waiting to feel like killing or purging, you never will.

That is one extreme.

The other is solitude.

By that I mean the attitude that you are completely on your own to change yourself by yourself. No. God is the one who made you new and he is the one who will renew you. His power is the power you have access to kill and purge.

You might think—I can't kill sexual sin and purge evil speech.

This passage says something different. This is who you are. You were built for this. Let me explain what I mean.

I have two dogs. If you've been around you have heard me talk about my older dog—Moses. Last Christmas we gave the kids a puppy that we named Lucy.



She looks cute but she is built to kill. Last week because of the cool weather I opened a window in our kitchen. As Tiff and I were sitting talking about our day a little sparrow flew in our home.

It was a tiny little thing trying feverishly to escape our home. It was flying from window to window. She would land on this window above our front door again and again. Of course, I wanted to capture the bird and let her go outside.

But every time I would get close the bird would fly off. I was not built to catch birds with my hands. Lucy on the other hand is built differently.

When the bird flew into our house, her instincts took over. The family pet became a hunter. She followed the bird with her eyes and looked for an opportunity.

The little sparrow made a fatal mistake. She landed on the ground and in less than a blink of an eye Lucy caught her. Lucy was lightning fast close to the ground and built to catch prey like that poor little sparrow.

Why? Was she able to catch the bird and I was not?

Quite literally she was built to catch that bird. I—on the other hand—am not.

Christian—you are already built to kill sexual sin and purge evil speech today. Why? Because you have put

off your old self already and God has made you different. You have a new power.

More than Lucy is able to catch little sparrows you are able to kill sexual sin and purge sins of speech.

Remember our question from the beginning?

Who are you?

And we said we are ALREADY new being RENEWED. Into what? What are we being renewed into?

and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

'after the image of its creator.' That sounds kinda clunky but we are being renewed to be reflect Jesus.

The goal of our renewed lives is that—

We love like Jesus.

We speak like Jesus.

We serve others like Jesus.

We think like Jesus.

We love what Jesus loves.

We hate what Jesus hates.

We act like Jesus acts.

We encourage others like Jesus would.

In short, we begin to look more and more like Jesus.

Or to answer the question—who are we?

And we said we are ALREADY new being RENEWED to resemble Jesus. That is the point and the goal.

We are already NEW being RENEWED as we—

We kill

We purge

And lastly,

3. We Bind (Col. 3:11)

We bind ourselves to other people. Just as we are bound to Christ we are bonded to others. This renewal is not something that we experience individually but together.

Because we are bound to Jesus we are bound to others.

¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."

Paul is not saying that these differences in our ethnicities or social distinctions do not exist. He is saying they do not matter when we consider what we have in common in Christ.

If we were to render verse it might say:

Here there is not American and immigrant, Democrat and republican, rich and poor, white collar and blue collar; but Christ is all and in all.

Christ is all—he is the most important factor in who we are. And Christ is 'in all.' He defines who we are not our:

Money

Politics

Education

Citizenship

And this brings us all the way back to where we started.

Who are you?

We are those that kill sexual sin and purge evil speech who bind ourselves together because we are bound to Jesus.

Who are we?

We are those who belong to and reflect Jesus.

PRAY

“Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love.” 2 John 3