

“Our All in All”
Colossians 3:5-11
Sunday, June 4th, 2023

Many of you are aware that I like to know what your favorite verses are from the Bible. On occasion, I'll ask people about their favorite verse, and they'll respond that they don't have any favorites...because they like them all.

I'm thinking the next time someone answers my question like that, I'll ask if that includes **Isaiah 36:12** - “But the Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?” *Can that really be one of your favorite verses?*

Other answers to Bible questions that interest me are your favorite Bible personalities or your favorite book of the Bible. If you want to know mine, just ask me after the service; I'm happy to share with you what they are.

This morning, I'd like to ask you to consider a bit of a different question. *What would be your favorite chapter in the Bible?* Bible Gateway is an internet search engine for the Bible. Among many other things, It lists the Top 25 Bible Chapters. The top 3 chapters according to their surveys are very familiar ones - **I Corinthians 13** (love chapter), **Psalms 23** (the Lord is my Shepherd), and **Genesis Chapter 1** (creation account).

We are presently studying one of my favorite chapters in the Bible - **Colossians Chapter 3**. Over the last 4 months, we've been studying - verse by verse - the New Testament book of Colossians. The sermon series is “A Collision with Colossians.” The Apostle Paul is the writer, and he addresses the church in Colossae, a small town in central Asia Minor, modern day Turkey.

Since this letter is also holy Scripture, it not only applies to the church that existed when Paul walked the earth. It also applies to the church wherever she can be found on earth today. The Holy Bible is God's Word to His Church.

In the verses before us today, Paul defines the type of behaviors God's people should be putting to death, and not allowing them to live.

Colossians 3:5-11:

“**5** Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication (sexual immorality), 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 (slander), filthy language (obscene talk) 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.”

Raise your hand - *How many like playing "mini golf?"* I do. It's something the family can do together. When we lived in Alabama, the game we called mini-golf was called "putt-putt." I don't know if there is a difference between the two. The idea in either game is to putt a golf ball through 18 holes of obstacles in the fewest shots.

Today, we're going to be involved in some "put-put." More accurately, we'll be engaged in some put, put, put, put. Four times in these 7 verses, Paul uses the word translated "put" in the English vernacular.

- (verse 5) "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth..."
- (verse 8) "But now you yourselves are to put off all these:
- (verse 9) "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,"
- (verse 10) "and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,"

Verses 5 and 8 contain two lists of sinful behaviors Paul addresses. In his New Testament letters, Paul provides lists of vices in 9 different books, including the one before us today (Colossians). The other places such lists appear are Paul's letter to the Romans, his first letter to the Corinthian church, Galatians, Ephesians, I Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, and Titus.

Of the five vices mentioned in **Colossians 3:5**, the first four are also listed in **I Thessalonians 4:3-7**; the last four also in **Romans 1:24-29**.

The behaviors listed in verse 5 are sexual sins - headed by "fornication." Your version of the Bible may have "sexual immorality" there. The original Greek word ("*porneia*") refers to any intercourse outside of the bond of marriage. The Bible's consistent definition of marriage is a life long union between one man and one woman.

This is so from the second chapter in the Bible. We read in **Genesis 2:24**, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." We have no warrant, permission, or right to amend anything that God has established. His Word is supremely authoritative and solidly unchanging.

The list in verse 5 concludes with "covetousness," which Paul says "is idolatry." Think about it - if someone spends much of their time thinking and talking about something or someone else, they are a short step away from coveting. Coveting is an inordinate desire for wealth or possessions or that which belongs to someone else. This could be another's spouse or any person who is the object of another's fixation.

Are you in a sexually immoral relationship? God's gift of sexual intimacy is to be enjoyed only in the biblical marital relationship - that being a husband and a wife. Nothing else. (Here's the first "put." You must **put** these sins to death - starve them, don't encourage them at all. In fact, Paul, writing his first letter to the Church at Corinth urged them to "flee sexual immorality." (**I Corinthians 6:18**). Don't fight it; flee! Run! Get

Away! Don't put yourself in a position to succumb to sexual sin. It's very difficult to overcome without accountability from a couple like-minded believers in Jesus.

The behaviors in the second list, found in verse 8, are headed by anger. "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy (slander), filthy language (obscene talk) out of your mouth." Commentator N.T. Wright defines anger as "the continuous state of smouldering or seething hatred." (Wright, 137)

Before long, we will enter another season of selecting and training those whom we recognize as potential elders in this congregation. Among the qualifications the Bible gives us for potential elders is they should not be "covetous" (which is found in **I Timothy 3:3**). In addition, elders are to "not be quick-tempered" and they are "not to be violent" as we find in both **Titus 1:7** and **I Timothy 3:3**. You see how these qualification to serve as an elder intersect with today's passage: covetousness is idolatry, and having a quick temper and harboring violence are poison if they are in the hearts of men nominated and elected as elders. That should help guide us to choose by qualification, not relation.

As regards *anger* among all Christians, I find author David Garner's thoughts helpful. "The Church is supposed to be a different place from a world where people are at war with one another. It is to be a place where the destructive effects of anger fade. We must learn how to defuse our anger before it blows up in our face and destroys our fellowship. Anger becomes dangerous when it is fed, justified, encouraged, and nurtured. It eats away at the soul like a cancer and shrivels our gratitude to God and others." (Garland, 230)

"Filthy language out of your mouth," the 5th and last sin in the second list, does not simply refer to curse words. It has in mind the abusive language we use to hurt others. Christian speech is not determined solely by whether it is true or false, but by whether it helps or harms another." (Garland, 204-205)

Profane and vulgar language is noise pollution of the worst kind. It dishonors God and degrades men and women. Conversation punctuated by cursing, swear words, and crude and dirty expressions obscures the beauty of spoken ideas. Words that condemn others can destroy relationships. They can inflict lasting hurt to sensitive souls who are battered by verbal abuse.

Ungodly language creates an immoral and unspiritual atmosphere, which is hostile to clean thinking and living. Its deafening sound can all but drown out the voice of God's Spirit. That's why the Word of God spells out in clear terms the kind of language that must not come from the lips of followers of Jesus, as well as the kind that should characterize our speech.

This is the second "put" - put off all these sins listed in both lists.

Centuries ago the psalmist offered a prayer that we would be wise to echo: "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips" (**Psalms 141:3**). That prayer is needed today more than ever.

Because of these sins in verses 5 & 8, Paul warned, “the wrath of God is coming” (verse 6). God hates sin and will one day judge it. The apostle stresses these sins attract God’s displeasure like a magnet attracts nails or like a high steeple on an isolated hill draws lightning. All who sin are under a death penalty, waiting for that day. We who have trusted Christ, by contrast, have been rescued from death. Our penalty has already been paid. *Why, then, would we continue to act as God’s enemy and do things He hates?* We are children of God and should seek to live worthy of our salvation!

In verse 9, we find the third “put” - Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,” The old man (the person we were before Jesus invaded our lives with His saving grace) has been put behind us. We are no longer that person; we no longer have to lie to others. We have become people of the Truth.

In verse 10 we find the fourth and final “put” - “and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,” It’s not enough that the old man be put away, the new man must also be put on in its place.

In verse 11, the transformation we realize into the image of God recognizes no racial-religious, cultural, or social boundaries. Verse 11 reads, “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ is all and in all.” Commentator William Hendriksen observes here, “All racial bigotry, chauvanism, and snobbery is condemned here. Here the truth that before God all men are equal receives its best expression.” (Hendriksen)

Paul closes verse 11 with the statement “Christ is all and all.” We turn again to William Hendriksen who notes:

“Christ, as the all-sufficient Lord and Savior, is all that matters. His Spirit-mediated indwelling in all believers, and whatever racial-religious, cultural, or social background they be, guarantees the creation and gradual perfection in each and in all believers, of whatever racial-religious, cultural, or social background they be, guarantees the creation and gradual perfection in each and in all of “the new man, who is being renewed for full knowledge, according to the image of Him who created him.” Thus, most appropriately, the very theme of the entire letter, namely, “Christ, the Pre-eminent One, the Only and All Sufficient Savior,” climaxes this passage.” (Hendriksen, 154).

A Tennessee farmer once said, “What comes up in the bucket is usually what’s down in the well.” The sexual immorality, bursts of anger, and loathsome speech in Paul’s lists are all tokens of inner wickedness. The only solution is to change what is down in the well of our very souls. Only giving ourselves completely to Christ and allowing His transforming power to fumigate and permeate our thoughts and actions will solve the sin problem in our lives.

<p>You’re probably familiar with the FBI’s “Ten Most Wanted” list. These are top criminals that the government would like to see captured. Now that we’ve “died with Christ,” we should take seriously our own “most wanted” list—desires and actions that we want to see out of our lives because they don’t bring honor to the Lord. If you are struggling to eradicate the control of</p>
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these sins, commit to prayer and also seek the counsel of a wise Christian pastor, elder, or counselor to help you.