

Title: The Christian Battle

Text: Colossians 3:5-11

Introduction

In the **area of sanctification** – which **metaphor** best describes **your Christian life**?

Is your **Christian life** *marked more*:

- By a **cruise-ship mentality**?
- Or by a **battleship mentality**?

J. C. Ryle – in his excellent book – *Holiness* – makes this **thought-provoking statement**.

He writes:

“A **true Christian** is **one** who has not only **peace of conscience** – but **war within**.”¹

Did you **catch that**? Does that **describe your life**?

Friends, **the truth** is that – as **Christians**:

- Not only do we have **peace of conscience** – because of **what Christ has done**.
- But we also have **war within** – because of **indwelling sin**.

Listen to what the **Westminster Confession of Faith** says regarding **sanctification**.

It says:

¹ J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (Cambridge: Redwood Burn, 1959), 21.

“This **sanctification** is **throughout**, in **the whole man**; yet **imperfect** in **this life**, there **abiding** still **some remnants** of **corruption** in **every part**; whence **ariseth** a **continual** and **irreconcilable war**, the **flesh** **lusting** against **the Spirit**, and **the Spirit** against **the flesh**.”²

I want you to **notice** the **words** – “a **continual** and **irreconcilable war**”.

These words aptly **sum up** the **normal Christian life** this **side of eternity**.

Our **sanctification** – our **fight against sin** is:

- **Not a breeze** – but a **battle**.
- It is **not peace** – but **war**.
- In fact – it is a **matter of life and death!**

As **those** who have **died** and been **raised with Christ** – **this is something we *must* engage in:**

- We *must* **fight against sin**.
- We *must* **battle against sin**.
- We *must* **put sin to death**.

And **that’s what we’ll be seeing** in **our passage** today.

Now – if we remember – **Paul** began the **practical section** of **the letter** – in **Colossians 3:1-4** – by **reminding** us of **our new identity in Christ**.

As we saw last time – Paul **reminds** us that:

Our new identity gives us a new priority.

² WCF 13.2

As **those** who have been **raised with Christ**:

- **We are to seek and set our minds on things above.**
- **We are to let heavenly realities *shape* and *govern* the way we *think* and *live our lives* here on earth.**
- **We are – to put it simply – to have a heavenly mindset.**

And – in **our passage** today – **Paul continues** his **train of thought** as he **deals** with the **practical aspects** of **Christian living** – albeit this time **moving from** that of **our mindset** in **verses 1-4** – to that of **our lifestyle** in **verses 5-17**.

- **And today** – we'll **focus** on the **negative aspect** of **this lifestyle** in **verses 5-11** – **what we should put off**.
- **Next time** – we'll **look at** the **positive aspect** of **this lifestyle** in **verses 12-17** – **what we should put on**.

And the **main point** I want us to **take away** from **our passage** today is this:

Our new identity demands a sin-killing activity.

And **what we are going to see** from **today's passage** is that:

- **Paul issues us** – *firstly* - with **a license to kill**.
- And then **he provides us** – *secondly* – with **incentives to kill**.

So, let's **take each of these** in turn.

Firstly – let's look at ***the license to kill*** ...

1. THE LICENCE TO KILL (vv.5, 8-9a)

Look with me at **verse 5**:

*“Therefore ... [*that is – because we have **died** and **been raised** with **Christ** – Paul writes] ... **put to death** what belongs to your *earthly nature* ...”*

Now, let’s **not skim over** this!

I want you to **notice** the **strong language** that **Paul uses** here:

- Paul doesn’t say **control** what belongs to your earthly nature.
- He doesn’t say **suppress** what belongs to your earthly nature.
- He doesn’t say **tame** what belongs to your earthly nature.

No! **What** does **Paul say**?

He says:

*“... **put to death** what belongs to your *earthly nature* ...”*

In other words – we are to **kill it – mortify it – murder it – slay it – execute it – exterminate it – eradicate it – obliterate it!**

Or – to use a **sports analogy**:

- We are **not** talking here about a **boxing match**.
- We are **not** talking here about a **wrestling match**.
- We are **not even** talking here about **the UFC**.³

No! **What we are talking about here** – *for those of you gamers!* – is **‘Mortal Kombat’!**

³ Ultimate Fighting Championship

It's **one** where it is **not enough** – merely to:

- **Defeat** your **opponent**.
- **Maim** your **opponent**.
- Or even to **land a knockout punch**.

No! This is a **matter of life and death!**

It's a **matter of kill** – or **be killed!**

As **Paul warns us in Romans 8:13:**

“... if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”⁴

Or – in the **famous words of John Owen:**

“Be killing sin – or sin will be killing you.”⁵

So, friends, **what Paul is doing** in our passage today is **issue a call – a command – to kill!**

We are to be ruthless – we are to show no mercy – we are to spare no effort in “putting to death” what belongs to our earthly nature.

Sounds **radical?**

Well – **Paul is simply echoing the sentiments of Jesus himself.**

⁴ ESV

⁵ John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2004), 5.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:29-30?

Jesus said:

“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Friends, **do we see the seriousness – the urgency – the solemnity – of Jesus’ words?**

- **Sin** is *not* to be **coddled**.
- It is *not* to be **indulged** in.
- It is *not* to be **trifled** with.

For **nothing less** than **our eternal destiny** *may* be **at stake!**

Therefore:

- **Sin** is to be **put away!**
- It is to be **killed!**
- It is to be **mortified!**

Now – just **to be clear:**

In saying that our eternity destiny *may* be **at stake** – I’m *not* saying that **true believers** can **lose** or **forfeit** their **salvation**.

No! Scripture is abundantly clear that true believers are secure in Christ!

In fact – as we saw last time – in **Colossians 3:3** – **Paul had just said** that – as **believers** – **our lives** are *“hidden with Christ in God”*.

In other words – **we are secure in Christ!**

- **We are kept by Christ!**⁶
- **No one is able to snatch us out of his hand!**⁷
- And **nothing** can separate us from **the love of God** that is in **Christ Jesus!**⁸

So, if *that's not what I mean* – what, then, *do I mean* when I say that **our eternal destinies may be at stake** if we are **not** in the **business** of **killing sin**?

Well, **simply this**.

What I mean is that:

- If **sin** is the **pattern** of **our life**.
- If we are **at peace** with **sin**.
- If we are **not fighting** against **sin** – *no matter how imperfectly* that may be.

Then – **I think** we **really ought** to **examine ourselves** to see **whether or not** we are **in the faith**.⁹

Listen to the words of Jesus in **Matthew 12:33** – Jesus says:

“Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.”

That's what I'm getting at.

Now, **some of you** may have **heard** of the **story** of **Charles Spurgeon** who was **once approached** by a **drunkard**:

⁶ Jude 24

⁷ John 10:28-29

⁸ Rom 8:38-39

⁹ 2 Cor 13:5

The **drunkard** – who **reeked** of **alcohol** – said to him – “**Hey, Mr. Spurgeon! Remember me? I’m one of your converts!**”

To which – **Spurgeon** responded – “**Yes! You must be one of mine! For you certainly can’t be one of the Lord’s!**”

Well – **Spurgeon** is simply **operating** on the **principle** of **fruit** in the **believer’s** **life**:

- A **good tree** bears **good fruit!**

Now – *of course!* – we’re *not* talking here about **sinless perfection** – but **sincere progression**:

- Are we **seeing evidence** – are we **seeing fruits** – *no matter how small and imperfect* – of the **Spirit’s work** in our lives?
- Is the **general direction** and **trajectory** of our lives – *in spite of its fits and starts* – towards the **pursuit of holiness** – *without which* – **no one** will see the **Lord?**¹⁰

Friends, **Paul’s point** – and **Jesus’ point** – is **clear**. As **believers**:

- **We must be serious!**
- **We must do whatever it takes!**
- **We must do whatever is necessary** – to **deal with sin!**

Whether that means:

- **Not going to certain places.**
- **Not keeping certain company.**
- **Or not watching certain shows.**

¹⁰ Heb 12:14

We *must* do whatever it takes to deal with sin! We *must* strangle the life out of sin! We *must* put sin to death!

And the **good news** is this: **This is something we *can* do!**

As **Pastor Craig reminded us** last week – we have been **given *power* over sin!**

For **in Christ**:

- **We have *died* to sin.**
- **We have been *raised* with Christ.**
- **And we have been *given* a **new nature** – with **new desires!****

Let us – therefore – **in keeping** with **our new nature** – and **by the Spirit** – **put sin to death!**

Now, let's **get practical** for a **moment**:

I want you to **think** about a **sin** that **you struggle with** – perhaps a **besetting sin** in **your life**.

Now – with **that sin in mind** – I want you to **ask yourself**:

- **What steps** have you **taken** – if any – to **put that sin to death?**
- Or – if not – **what steps can you take** – with **God's help** – to **put that sin to death?**

Maybe this can be **our homework**:

- Let's **go back** and **think what** are **some things we can do** to **put our besetting sins to death.**
- We **might even want** to **talk to someone** about it – or have **someone** to be **accountable** to – as we **battle that sin.**

The **key** is that **we hate sin** – and are **taking steps** to **eradicate it** from **our lives**.

And **this is important**:

- For – as we have seen – **this is an evidence of our salvation**.¹¹
- It **shows** that **we are those** who are **led by the Spirit of God**.¹²

As **John Calvin** so helpfully **reminds us**:

“We are saved by faith alone – but the faith that saves is never alone”.

In other words: **Those whom God justifies – he also sanctifies**.

Or – to put it differently: A **proof** of our **justification** – is that of our **sanctification**.

We can’t have one – without the other.

So – **with that in mind** – let’s **make every effort** to **make our calling and election sure**.¹³

Now – **this goes without saying** – but **this is a lifelong battle**:

- There is **never a day** – this **side of eternity** – where **our battle against sin** is **at an end**.
- There is **no such thing** as a **‘cease-fire’** with **sin**.

For **while** it is **true** that **we have died to sin** – and that **sin no longer reigns in us** – it is **also true** that **sin** nonetheless **remains**.

It’s the **‘already-but-not yet’** **tension** that we **talked about** last time.

¹¹ Rom 8:9

¹² Rom 8:14

¹³ 2 Pet 1:10

A day will come – and oh, how we long for that great and glorious day! – when we will finally be free – *totally* free – from the presence of sin!

But till then – in this present evil age:

- **We need to fight.**
- **We need to battle.**
- **We need to put sin to death.**

As **John Owen** puts it:

“You must mortify! You must make it your daily work. You must be constantly at it while you live. Cease not a day from this work! Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you!”¹⁴

So, **Paul** says we are to “**put to death**” what belongs to “**our earthly nature**”.

But **Paul isn’t one** who leaves us with vague generalities – he gets **specific**.

In **verses 5 and 8** – **Paul** gives us **two lists** of sins – *by no means exhaustive!* – that we are to **put to death** – that we are to **put away**.

At the **risk of oversimplification**:

- We can **classify** the **first list** – found in **verse 5** – as “**sexual sins**”.
- And the **second list** – found in **verses 8 and 9** – as “**speech sins**”.

Let’s **briefly examine** each of **these lists** in turn:

¹⁴ Owen, 5.

Sexual Sins

Firstly, **Paul** addresses **sexual sins**.

Look at **verse 5**:

*“Therefore, **put to death** what **belongs** to your **earthly nature**: **sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.**”*

Now, **some scholars suggest** that there is **a progression** to **the sins listed** here.

And I think **they have a point**.

For if we **look carefully** – **this list of sins** seems to **progress**:

- From the **outward** – to the **inward**.
- From the **external action** – to the **internal motivation**.

To use an **onion analogy**:

- It’s as if **Paul** is **peeling back** the **outer layers** of the **onion** – and **making his way** into its **inner core**.
- He is **getting from** what seems to be **the surface issue** – and **makes his way down** to **the root issue**.

So, very **briefly**:

- The term **“sexual immorality”** – **πορνεία** in Greek – (this is where we get our **English** word **‘pornography’** from) – this is a **broad, general, umbrella term** that refers to **any type** of **sexual sin**. It refers to **any type** of **illicit sexual activity**.
- **“Impurity”** – refers to **‘corruption’** or **‘uncleanness’** of **any kind** – whether in **thought** or **deed**.

- **“Lust”** refers to an **inordinate passion and emotion** for something.
- **“Evil desire”** refers to a **deep-seated desire and longing** for something that **God** has **forbidden**.
- And – finally – **“greed”**. **“Greed”** refers to **“the state of desiring to have more than one’s due”**.¹⁵

And **this last sin** – Paul **equates** with **“idolatry”** – which simply means **‘misdirected worship’**.

That is, **whenever we choose something above God** – **whenever we put something in the place of God** – we are **committing idolatry!**

And **this** lies at **the root of all sins** – including **sexual sin**.

Do you see the progression that **Paul** is **trying to portray** here?

Paul is **saying** that **these internal desires, cravings, and longings give rise to** – or **culminates in** – the **external act of sexual immorality**.

It is **similar** to **what James** says in **James 1:14-15**:

“But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire [inward!]. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin [outward!], and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.”

And **this** – *I believe* – is **instructive!**

It **reminds us** that **sin** must be **dealt with not merely** at the **outward, external, or behavioural level** – **but, rather** – at the **inward, internal, or heart level**.

That is, **unless** we **address** the **problem of the heart** – we will **miss the heart of the problem**.

¹⁵ BDAG

And **that's** the **genius of the gospel!** For **the gospel** deals *not merely* with **our outward actions** – it deals with **our inward motivations**.

- It **deals with our heart**.
- It **renews our heart**.
- It **changes our heart**.

And **it is only** because **our heart** has been **changed** – that **we** have been **given a new nature** – that **we can put to death these vices**.

And – as **those** who have been **raised with Christ** – **that's what Paul says we are to do**.

We are to spare no effort in killing – in **mortifying** – **sexual sins**.

Now, we may be **wondering**: Of **all the sins** that **Paul** could **possibly talk about** – **why** does he **focus** on *sexual sins*?

Well, **perhaps** it was **contextual**:

- **Perhaps** it was **something** that was **prevalent** in the **culture** that **the Colossians** found themselves in.
- Or **perhaps** it was **something** that **they faced** – and were **struggling with**.

We **can't** be sure. But – *more generally speaking* – I like how **one author** puts it:

“**Few areas** have the **power** to **destroy** with as much **devastating power** as **sexuality** ... [**A brief glance at the world today will show this to be true! He continues*] ... Because of the **significance** and **sacredness** of **sex**, **Satan** has **concentrated much of his effort** at **polluting us** in this **one arena**.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Andy M. Davis, *An Infinite Journey: Growing toward Christlikeness* (Greenville: Ambassador, 2014), 310.

That – *perhaps* – is **why Paul** – under the **inspiration of the Holy Spirit** – **zooms in to focus** specifically on **sexual sins**.

This is a **perennial struggle** and **temptation** that **all of us face** – whether **men or women** – whether in the **first-century** or in the **twenty-first century**.

And in a **sex-crazed, sex-obsessed, sex-saturated culture** such as **ours** – **we do well to** – **Peter** tells us – “**abstain from the passions of the flesh**”.¹⁷

Why?

Well – **Peter** continues – because **these “wage war against [our souls]”**.¹⁸

So – **with so much at stake** – we must **see to it**:

- That we **fight lust!**
- That we “**flee sexual immorality**”!¹⁹
- That we **not give the devil a foothold in this area of our lives!**

We must **put in every safeguard** possible – we must **do all that we can** – to **put this sin to death!**

But **Paul doesn’t stop** with **sexual sins**.

Perhaps as if to **pre-empt those of us** who **think we** may have **gotten away under the radar** – *which, I doubt is many of us!* – **Paul goes on** to the **second list of sins** – in **verses 8-9** – that we are to **put away** – namely, **speech sins**.

¹⁷ 1 Pet 2:11 ESV

¹⁸ 1 Pet 2:11 ESV

¹⁹ 1 Cor 6:18

Speech Sins

Look at verses **8-9a**:

*“But now, **put away** all the following: **anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another ...”***

Now – notice: Whereas **the first list progresses** from **the outward** (the action) to **the inward** (the heart) – *here* – **this second list progresses** from **the inward** (the heart) to **the outward** (the action).

And while **this second list of sins** may **not seem** as **vile and heinous** as **the first list of sins** – **Paul is nonetheless adamant** that we be **equally ruthless** in **dealing with it**:

- **We must put these away.**
- **We must put these to death.**

So, **Paul starts** with the **inward attitude** (the **condition** of our heart) – and **makes his way** to the **outward manifestation** of that **inward attitude** (the words of our mouth).

So, very briefly:

- **“Anger”** refers to a **deep-seated animosity** and **hostility** toward **someone or something**.
- **“Wrath”** refers to the **sudden outburst** or **expression** of that **inward anger**.
- **“Malice”** refers to **“a mean-spirited or vicious attitude or disposition”**²⁰ – one that has a **desire** or **intent** to **harm others**.
- **“Slander”** refers to **“speech that denigrates or defames” others**.²¹ It is – to put it simply – **character assassination** with our words.
- **“Filthy language”** refers to **abusive or obscene talk**.

²⁰ BDAG

²¹ BDAG

- And – finally – “**lying**” – which – I think – is **self-explanatory**. It has to do with **deceit**. And **my guess** is that **we’ve all engaged in this** in **one form or another**.

So, **Paul** is **clearly focusing** here on **speech sins** – on **sins of the tongue**.

And – according to **James** – **no member of the body** has the **potential to cause so much pain, anguish, and destruction** – as **the tongue**.

He likens **the tongue** as:

“... a fire ... a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”²²

And – *if we are **not careful*** – **our tongue** has the **potential to hurt others** – and even **destroy relationships**.

Now, I’m **not sure about you** – but **my guess** is that **we have all transgressed** – in **one way or another!** – in **this area of sin**.

I know **I have!** In fact – **one of the verses that constantly convicted me** as a **young believer** was **Ephesians 4:29** – which says:

*“Let **no corrupting talk** come out of **your mouths**, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*

And how **I needed that** as a **young man** – especially with **my crude** – even **coarse** – **joking!**

Friends, **Paul** is as **clear here** as **he was when dealing** with **sexual sins**:

- **We are *not* to rationalise them.**
- **We are *not* to entertain them.**
- ***But* we are to put them away.**
- **We are to put them to death.**

²² James 3:6, 8

So – **Paul** has **given us** the **licence to kill!**

We are to be **ruthless** – we are to be **intentional** – in **putting to death** whatever **belongs** to our **earthly nature**:

- **Whether** it is **‘big’ sins** such as **sexual immorality**.
- Or **whether** it is the **so-called ‘small’ sins** like **lying**.

All these *must* be **put away**.

But – as is the **custom** of **Paul** – he **doesn’t merely give us** the *command to kill* – but – along with it – he **gives us** the *reasons why we should do so*.

So, **let’s look** – for the **remainder** of the **sermon** – at *the incentive to kill ...*

2. THE INCENTIVE TO KILL (vv.6-7, 9b-11)

And **what we will see** is that **Paul** gives us **three reasons** – **three incentives** – for **putting sin to death** – whether *sexual sins, speech sins, or any kind of sin*.

Firstly – we should **kill sin** because of **God’s coming wrath**.

a. God’s Coming Wrath (v.6)

Look with me at **verse 6**.

After detailing the **list of sins** that we are to **put to death** – **Paul** writes:

*“Because of these, **God’s wrath** is **coming upon the disobedient**.”*

Now, I know that **God’s wrath** is **not a popular concept** in **today’s world** – and – *sadly!* – **even in some ‘Christian’ circles.**

Books such as *Love Wins* by **Rob Bell** – or *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* by **Joel Green** and **Mark Baker** – go so far as to *deny* or *downplay* the **wrath of God.**

For example – in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* – the **authors** make **statements** such as **these.** They write:

“**Divine wrath** is **not an affective quality** or ‘**feeling**’ on the part of **God.** Rather, it is a means of **underscoring how seriously God takes sin ... Whatever else can be made of Paul’s understanding of the death of Jesus, his theology of the cross lacks any developed sense of divine retribution.**”²³

Or so **they say.**

But – friends – **contrary to what these authors say** – and **whether we like it or not** – **God’s wrath** is an **undeniable fact in the Bible.**

Both the Old and New Testaments attest to it.

In fact, **God’s wrath** is a **corollary of his holiness.**

We can’t have one without the other.

Because **God** is **holy:**

- **He must hate sin.**
- **He must judge sin.**
- **He must cleanse sin.**

²³ Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in the New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 56.

And **Paul’s logic** in **verse 6** is **simple** – it is this:

Since **God** stands **diametrically opposed** to **sin** – since **God’s wrath** is **coming** upon **the sins of men** – **how can we** – who are **his people** – **called by his name** – **continue to walk in it?**

Friends, if **we persist** in **these sins** – if **we have no struggle** or **desire whatsoever** to **put these sins to death** – then – *as mentioned earlier*:

- **We should question whether** or **not we are truly saved.**
- **We can only expect the wrath of God** that is **to come.**

BUT! – if **we have truly come** to **saving faith** in **Christ**:

- **We can be thankful** that “**there is now no condemnation** for **those** [of us who are] **in Christ Jesus**”!²⁴
- **We can be thankful** that **we have “an advocate”** with **the Father in heaven** – **the one** who is **the “propitiation”** – the **wrath-absorber** – for **our sins!**²⁵

Let us – therefore – **produce fruit** in **keeping** with **repentance.**²⁶

Let us walk in a **manner worthy of the Lord** – **fully pleasing to him.**²⁷

And **let us hate sin** – **fight sin** – and **kill sin** in **our lives!**

Secondly – the **second incentive** that **Paul gives** for us to **mortify our sin** is that of – **our new identity in Christ.**

²⁴ Rom 8:1

²⁵ 1 John 2:1-2

²⁶ Matt 3:8

²⁷ Col 1:10

b. Our New Identity (vv.7, 9b-10)

Look at verses 7, 9 and 10 – Paul writes:

“... and you once walked in these things when you were living in them ... Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator.”

What Paul is doing here is simple: He is telling us to remember *who we now are in Christ*.

In verse 7 – Paul reminds us of our past – our pre-conversion life.

It was a time:

- When we *loved* the world and the things of the world.
- When we *walked* in the ways of the world.
- When we *lived* like the world.

As Paul puts it elsewhere in Ephesians 2:1-2:

“[We] were dead in [our] trespasses and sins in which [we] previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient.”

With the **implication** being:

- That’s **how we used to walk** – that’s **how we once lived**.
- **But now** that we are **in Christ** – we have been **changed** – we are **different!**
- **Let us** – therefore – **live differently** – **no longer** in the way that we used to!

For – friends – **not to do so** would be **akin** to:

- **A dog returning to its own vomit.**
- **Or a pig returning to wallow in the mud.**²⁸

Something **totally absurd** – and **incongruous** – for **those of us** who have been **given new life in Christ!**

And, then, in **verses 9-10** – **Paul reminds us** *both of our past* – *and our present reality.*

He **reminds us** that **when we came to Christ:**

- **We have been given an extreme makeover!**
- **We have been made new – the old has gone – and the new has come!**²⁹
- **We have** – as Paul puts it – **“put off the old self with its practices”** – and have **“put on the new self”!**

In essence – **what Paul is saying** is this:

- **We are not who we used to be** – *therefore* – **we don’t have to do what we used to do!**
- **Instead** – **we should *be who we are in Christ!***

But – **lest we think** it is **all done and dusted** – that **we’ve all attained perfection** – **Paul reminds us** that **we are in the process of:**

“... being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the Creator.”

In other words, **God is at work in us** – **transforming us** – **renewing us** – and **making us more and more Christ.**

²⁸ 2 Pet 2:22

²⁹ 2 Cor 5:17

And we are given this **glorious promise in Philippians 1:6**:

“I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Friends, we have been **made new!** We have a **new identity in Christ!** And **God** – through the **Holy Spirit** – is **at work in us** – making us more and more like Christ!

A **reality** that will be **brought to completion** – as we saw last time – **when Christ appears.**

- For **then** – we will also **appear with him in glory.**³⁰
- We will be **made like him** – because we will see him as he is.³¹

This – friends – *surely!* – is **incentive enough** for us to **put sin to death** – and to **walk in the newness of life** that we have been given!

Let us – therefore – with the **Spirit’s help** – be about the **business of killing sin!**

But **that’s not all!** Paul goes on to give us a **third incentive for killing sin** – and that is because of – **our new community in Christ.**

c. Our New Community (v.11)

Look with me at verse 11:

“In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.”

³⁰ Col 3:4

³¹ 1 John 3:2

What is Paul doing here?

Well, **Paul** – *I believe* – is **reminding us of the new people – the new humanity – the new community** – that **God** has **formed in Christ**.

He shifts the focus from that of **the individual believer** – to that of **the corporate body**.

In other words – **his command to kill sin** has **relevance *not only* for our individual life – but our corporate life** as a **body of believers**.

As **Paul** puts it elsewhere in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

“For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and we were all given one Spirit to drink.”

And in **Galatians 3:28**:

“There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Did you **notice** the words **“one body”** – and **“one in Christ Jesus”**?

That’s **the community** that **Christ died to create!**

A **community** marked:

- *Not* by **division** – *but* by **unity**.
- *Not* by **schism** – *but* by **oneness**.

No longer are we to be **defined** by **worldly standards and designations** – but by **Christ**.

Our identity – indeed, **our unity** – is **not founded** upon **our ethnic, cultural, economic, or social status** – but **in Christ**.

And that's **Paul's point!**

Paul's point is that – as believers:

- **We are in Christ.**
- **And Christ is all – and in all.**

And **because this is true** – the **implication** is **obvious**:

- **We must not destroy** the **unity** for which **Christ died** to **achieve**.
- Instead, **we must seek** to **uphold** – and **embody** – the **unity** that **we have in Christ**.
- **We must strive** – by the **grace of God** – to **put away** – and **put to death** – anything that could **potentially hinder, threaten, or disrupt** the **unity** of the **new community** of which **we are a part**.

And **what we need to understand** is that **all sins in general** – or **sexual** and **speech sins in particular** – has the **potential** to **destroy this unity**.

That is why we are to **put sin to death** – for **these are relationship destroyers**.

And **when we do that** – when **outsiders look in** and **observe the love we have for each other** – **then, and only then** – will **they know** that **we are disciples of Christ**.³²

Conclusion

So, to **recap**: **What we've seen** from **our passage today** is that:

- **Paul has given us a license** – a **mandate** – to **kill sin**.
- **And he has given us reasons** – **incentives** – to **kill sin**.

³² John 13:34-35

And **this is possible** because of **who we now are in Christ** – and we are to **be who we are in Christ!**

Well – friends – as we close – **I thought** it would be **fitting** to **leave us** with the **counsel** of **what is perhaps** – *outside of Scripture!* – the **pre-eminent writer** on **this subject** on **the mortification of sin** – the **great Puritan John Owen**.

Listen to what he suggests about **how we best fight against sin** – a **counsel** which **I find** both **insightful** – and **helpful**.

Owen writes:

“Labour ... to fill your hearts with the cross of Christ. Consider the sorrows he underwent, the curse he bore, the blood he shed, the cries he put forth, the love that was in all this to your souls, and the mystery of the grace of God therein. Meditate on the vileness, the demerit, and punishment of sin as represented in the cross, the blood, the death of Christ. Is Christ crucified for sin, and shall not our hearts be crucified with him unto sin? Shall we give entertainment unto that, or hearken unto its dalliances, which wounded, which pierced, which slew our dear Lord Jesus? God forbid! Fill your affections with the cross of Christ, that there may be no room for sin.”³³

Friends – **may this** be ever – and **increasingly** – **true of us!**

- Let’s **fill our affections** with **the cross of Christ**.
- Let’s **meditate upon it**.
- Let’s **be consumed by it**.

Why? **To the end** that **there may be no room for sin** in **our lives!**

Let us pray.

³³ John Owen, “Indwelling Sin” in *Overcoming Sin & Temptation*, eds. Kelly M. Kopic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 331-32.