

As you're turning, I want to show you a picture of a scene and I want you to tell me what this is...



It's a funeral, of course. That scene doesn't conjure up good thoughts on this first Sunday of the New Year does it? Funerals mean there has been a death and DEATH is always bad, right? Think about that now...is DEATH always bad? What if the cancer treatment KILLS the cancer? Hmm? That's not bad is it? What if the antibiotic kills the sinus infection you've been struggling with for days? Death is not always a bad thing...

Today, on this first Sunday of the New Year 2020, we're going to talk about death that can be good.

Colossians 3:5-9

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^[a] sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.^[b] 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^[c] with its practices.

Have you ever heard of the Heidelberg Catechism? It's old. It's been around since 1563. What is a catechism? It's a summary of a Christian principle in the form of a question, followed by its answer. It's often used for teaching children the principles of our faith. The Heidelberg Catechism was written in Germany... Here's the first question and answer...

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

Question: What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil...

What is the power of the devil? It's a three-letter word:

SIN

Now what did we just read in Colossians 3 that we ARE to do with sin? What were those first three words of verse 5? PUT TO DEATH. This morning I want you to see yourself as a pallbearer...



A pallbearer carries the coffin on a dead person... I want you to see yourself today carrying the coffin of your sin...as I see myself carrying the coffin of my sin. Why? Because we must put sin to DEATH!

Church, see the Chorus of the song that we were just singing...

"Living Hope"

**Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope**

Jesus came to this earth to conquer sin and He did. That's why He came. We have a sin problem...and we can do nothing about it... We just celebrated the fact that Jesus came to us...that's Christmas...the coming of the One who would devastate and conquer sin...And He did, because He took it upon Himself and destroyed it so that we might not be mastered by it or devastated by it.

I want to ask you to look at me this morning...and I want to ask you a very pointed question... What needs to die in you? What needs to go in the coffin? What sin or sins have you chained and shackled today? Think about it. Be honest... What needs to go in the box?



Listen, I'm not asking you to make a New Year's resolution... I'm not asking you to read some self-help book to make you feel better. I'm asking you to look to Jesus and understand that He died on the cross, so that you would not have to live in sin, but overcome it and have LIFE!

I hate to do it, but I have to remind us...this is what sin does...



Never forget that... You see, that's what the Apostle Paul has been telling the church at Colossae. He's been reminding them of the truth.



He's been trying to help them distinguish the difference between that which is true and that which is false, because false teachers have been confusing the people about the truth of the Gospel. So, Paul's been reminding them of the truth... What's the truth? Simple... that human beings need no one or nothing else other than Jesus. Quite simply: Jesus is Everything...He is preeminent over all! Church, Jesus Christ is King of the Universe...He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and it's through Him that we have the ability to live a life above the pain and mire of sin. **Look back at vs 1**...This is what Matthew showed us last week...

Colossians 3:1-3

1 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.

Hidden in Christ...that's the one set of footprints folks... Remember from last week...



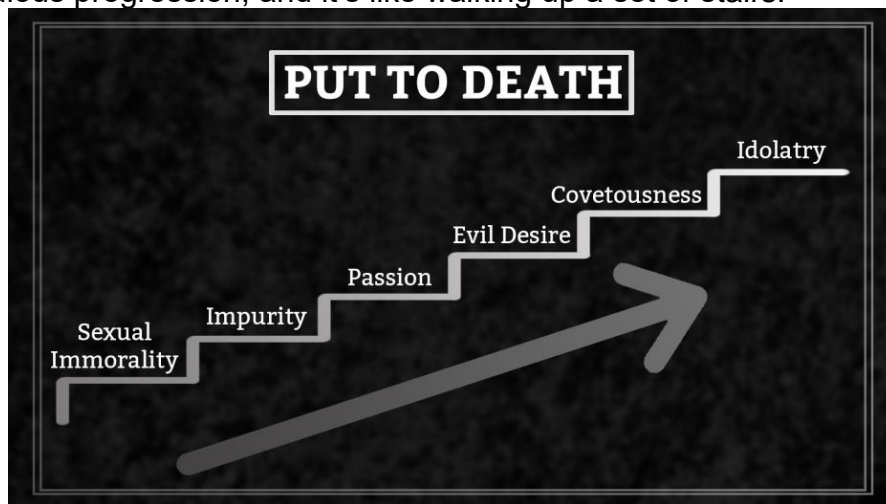
Let me explain something as you look at that picture: When you and I surrender our lives to Jesus, we are hidden in Him! It's one set of footprints. We are then to live our lives walking in His footprints. But, Jesus won't make you and me walk in His footsteps, will He? No. We have to choose to follow Him.

Listen, grasp this... Positionally, we are DEAD to sin as followers of Christ. In other words, when you and I were saved, we were taken from Satan's kingdom and placed or POSITIONED in Christ's kingdom. We became royalty, children of the King. But, we can still choose to walk in the muck and mire of sin and even though we are children of God, we can leave the palace and walk in the back alleys of the world...and thus we can act like children of the world instead of children of the King...it's all based on our choices. And that's why Paul told the Colossian Christians:

Colossians 3:5

⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^[a] sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

I want to show you something. Take a look at the screens...there's a progression in what we've just read. An insidious progression, and it's like walking up a set of stairs.



We start out with an act...sexual immorality, for instance and we slowly but surely work our way up the stairs through impurity, passion, evil desires, coveting what's not ours...to end up at idolatry. Church, can I tell you what idolatry is in its simplest form? It's worshipping that which is false and all idolatry is ultimately worshipping yourself. It is the ultimate selfie... It's all about me...and what I want... Every sin is basically selfish...the worship of what I want instead of what God wants.

Listen this morning...as believers, we have the desire to please the Lord, but we have the old sinful flesh working against us. As believers, once we're saved, we begin the process of sanctification. That means being made holy. That's...

2 Corinthians 5:21

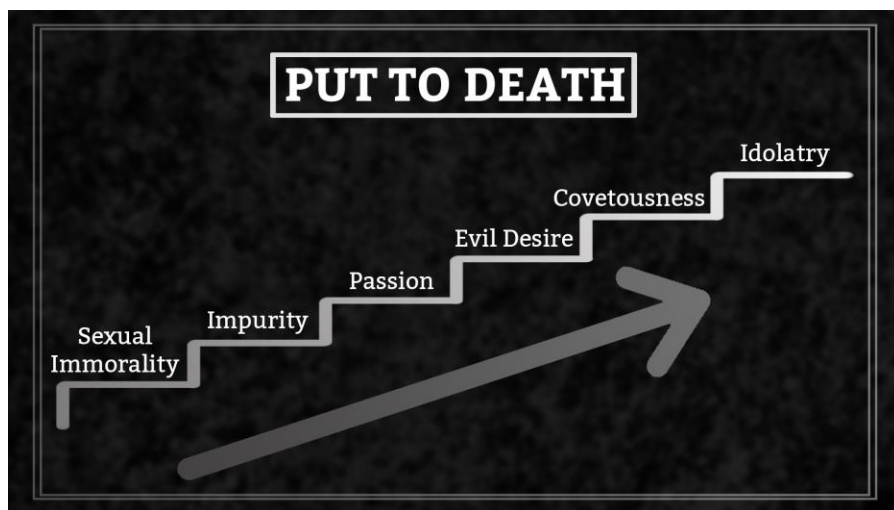
²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That's also...

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3

¹ Finally, then, brothers,^[a] we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification:^[b] that you abstain from sexual immorality.

Church, when you read the teaching Epistles of the apostles in the New Testament do you know what you will find the majority of the time when a list of sins are given? Do you know what's listed first most often in the list? SEXUAL IMMORALITY. Why? Because it's a big deal with us. Sexual immorality is the tip of the spear in every generation and every era of time and always will be. Satan is always looking to pervert God's divine design and his system will seek to push humanity to go against what God calls righteous. I guarantee it, every person in this room deals with being pushed in the area of sexuality. See the stair steps again...



Are you dealing with sexual thoughts...they will progress to impurity, passion, evil desire, which is seeking to have that which is not yours because you are worshipping what yourself, (that's idolatry) and not what the Lord wants. Is the Lord trying to be mean? When He says there are to be no relations outside of marriage, no relations outside of a man and a woman...is that being mean? No. That's His design.

Paul in writing to the Ephesians says in Ephesians 5:22, wives and in verse 25 husbands. Who is this? Wives are women...husbands are men. Husbands is in the masculine and wives is in the feminine. That's God's design. Look at verse 25...

Ephesians 5:25

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Oh, BTW...when a man and a woman get married, what does the Bible say? They become what? One flesh...

Ephesians 5:31-32

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Two men and two women can't become one flesh...because it's not part of God's divine design...even anatomically this won't work...2 men and 2 women can't create life.

Church, you look at Scripture from the Old Testament to the New Testament and you will find that sexual immorality is always at the root of false worship. From the worship of the Baals in the OT with their gods and goddesses of fertility...to the NT and the Temple of Diana in Ephesus:



where the people would go to the Temple and worship a false god by committing sexual immorality...it's the act of sexual immorality that's always tied to idolatry, which is wanting what I want over what God wants and has designed.

Romans 8:13

¹³ For 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.

Are you living in sexual sin today? Listen, you will never experience joy and power in this life chained to sin. **I'm talking to the Christian**... Are you listening today? You can't live in sexual sin and know the power of Jesus in your life, because you are not truly walking in His footsteps. You have deviated from the path...



You've chosen not to walk that way...which is the best way... No...you've instead chosen the STEPS...that lead to the pathway of idolatry...therefore you have forfeited the best...you have bought Satan's pack of lies...that you can be a Christian and live like the world. That's a lie! What is the Heidelberg Catechism? See it again...

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

Question: What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil...

I said a moment ago, that *I'm talking to the Christian*, because the person **not** following Christ...the person who is not part of His kingdom...the person who is still in the world's parade, WELL, they hear this teaching of Jesus and they think it's nuts! You see, there is NO WAY the unbeliever who is part of the world's system is going to think any of this is right. They will say it is wrong. Why? Because they are not born again. They are in darkness. They have no reason to believe that anything they should want to do should be inhibited. That's because their god is themselves. **But, there's a huge problem with this thinking...**

Colossians 3:6

⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Have you read the book of the Revelation? It's really, really bad for those who reject Jesus and what He did for them on the cross. Instead of receiving grace and mercy, they will pour on to themselves God's judgment...wrath.

Don't fall for it! Don't choose the sin. Kill it! Hate it! Despise it for what it's doing to you! You've got to take the ax to the root... I want to ask you to look at Jesus today...imagine Him looking at you...



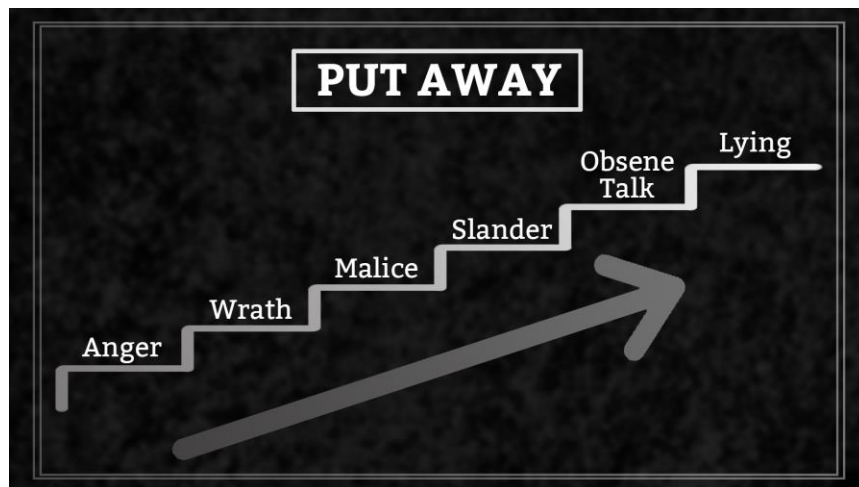
Can you look at Him? If you find yourself looking away...listen...that's the Holy Spirit drawing you... Kill it! Kill the sin by looking at Him...your sin-bearer! Oh church...we don't deserve His grace, His mercy...His forgiveness but, He offers it freely to all who will forsake their way and go His way.

We've got to KILL THE SIN! ...and remember in Jesus, you have been delivered from sin...verse 7:

Colossians 3:7-9

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^[c] with its practices.

Now, I don't know if you noticed it...but we just saw a second set of stairs... See it...



Watch this... here's another progression and this, once again, is going to hit us all. You start out with being angry with somebody. They hurt your feelings or do something to you or someone you love that really bothers you and it makes you angry. And then the anger grows...and it smolders into wrath...the Greek word means: "heat"... Wrath, then grows to slander...in other words, we'll cut them down in what we say. The word is "blasphema"...to attack a person's name. But, it gets

worse...this slander grows to the point of cussing...obscenity...abusive language (in the Greek), which ultimately ends up with you being okay with telling LIES about them...

Sounds about right for something that Satan pushes in His system, after all...He is the Father of Lies. Just look in the Bible at all the lies. Eve lies and says, "Satan made me do it." Adam lies and says, "Eve made me do it." Abraham lied and called his wife, his sister. So, did his son, Isaac. And Jacob...oh what a liar he was...nicknamed, "trickster." And that's just Genesis. Lies, lies, lies...

Remind church family, what is the purpose of this letter to the Colossians?



To distinguish that which is true from that which is WHAT? False...lies...

Church, the point that's being made in verses 7-9 is that the bottom of the stairs is anger...it all starts with anger.

Who are you angry with today? Jesus said, "Father forgive them." He's our example. Are you trying to worship Jesus with anger in your heart? You can't do it...not truly. I have a novel idea...as a Christian what might it look like if you go to that person you are angry with and say, "I'm sorry?"

You say, "It's their fault." Might be... But, is any of it your fault? Own up to that part which is yours...even if it's only 10 or 20%. You know what? When you and I go to somebody...somebody that we might have even grown to really, really dislike and you say to them... "I'm sorry...I want to make things right..." Yes...that will require the power of Jesus to do that through you...but, do you know what happens the majority of the time...they'll see your humble spirit and say, "I'm sorry too." And you know what you'll have? PEACE! And you'll hear the chains hit the ground. Freedom!

Dear church family, the ability to live the Christian life is not related to me standing up here and giving you some sort of pep-talk, instead it's directly related to what you think about Jesus and yourself. Will you walk in His footsteps and follow His tracks...



or will you walk up the steps of sin that leads to idolatry and lies?

Let me ask you this as we close... Please look at the screens please... see the lyrics of the song one more time: "Living Hope." Get this now...

"Living Hope"

**Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope**

Look at Jesus...imagine Him looking at you...



Don't shrink away...He says, "Come, unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you REST." But, listen...in order for that to happen you'll have to attend a funeral...



you'll have to die yourself, and if you will...that death will be a good thing!