

distinction between the old Adam and the new Adam being in Christ. How by virtue of being human, because of Adam's sin, we were in union with Adam, inheriting all the curses, all the behavior, all of the sin nature that Adam had rightly merited. and how being in Christ, being brought to salvation, is really a transfer from this kingdom of Adam, from this union with Adam, to union with Christ. And then last time we were looking at this idea of what it means to be in Christ and how that moves from the indicative, the statement about what is, how the things are true of us, we are righteous in Christ and so forth, how that impacts the imperatives, how that yields the imperative of be what you are. Now, now we've kind of established that imperative, that imperative to be what we are. What does that actually look like on a day-to-day basis?

What is the rhythm of union with Christ? How many of y'all would say you have a daily rhythm? I'm seeing some nods and hands, yep. Yeah, I think most of us have a daily rhythm, and there are certain things we do every day that we may not like, we may not enjoy particularly. We probably don't even think about doing them because, you know, they're just a part of our daily rhythm. They're just something we do.

I hope most of y'all brushed your teeth this morning. You didn't do that because you enjoy it. You didn't do that probably even thinking about it a lot. It wasn't a conscious choice you made. It was just something you do. This is part of your daily rhythm. And these sorts of daily rhythms, these habits that we have, well, they don't seem that impressive, well, they're not that interesting, and well, they often aren't even conscious choices. They are, by far, according to research, some of the most impactful parts of your day. The things you do every day, without even thinking about it, are the things that often impact you the most.

And so what we wanna do is we want to put the rhythm of being in union with Christ into that daily habit. We want being in union with Christ, the imperative be what you are, to be a part of your life, to be part of this rhythm. So how do we do that? What is this rhythm of the union?

Well, our base text, the text we're gonna begin with to look at this is in Colossians chapter three, beginning at verse one. Some of y'all remember this from our sermon series on Colossians, about a year ago now, I think. Wow, time flies. But yes, Colossians chapter three, beginning at verse one, reading through verse 14.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above. Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 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. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, if one has

a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as God, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

So we see in this text, if we want to break this down to its most basic components, what is Paul telling his readers to do? What does being in union with Christ look like on a day-to-day basis? Well, it means to mortify and to vivify, to mortify and to vivify. Those are two major points we're going to look at as we look at this rhythm of the union. They're the two components of this rhythm of the union. Now, what does it mean to mortify?

We'll have in parentheses here, to put off. It means to take the sinful garments, the things that characterized you as in Adam, and to lay them aside. To put them off. To take off the robe of sin. That's what to mortify really means. To mortify in and of itself means to put to death. That's what Paul says here. To put that sin to death. To kill that sin. Now, why must we do this? Why is mortification such an important part of this rhythm of the union?

Well, the reason, one of the first reason we need to mortify sin is because sin is still present in us. Remember we said last time that sin's power has been broken in us, we have been successfully transferred out of the old Adam into the new Adam, into Christ, But that doesn't mean that the stains of sin, some of those sinful desires, some of those old sinful habits don't still cling to us. They do, and they will continue to do so until we are with Christ in heaven. And yet, because those sins are present in us, because there is sin in our lives, that means we need to put it off, if we need to mortify it. If it was true that being transferred into Christ meant that we had no sin present in us, that we were somehow made completely perfect, so that no Christian was capable of sin, then there'd be no need to mortify, because there'd be nothing to mortify. The reason we need to mortify sin is because sin is present in us. And that sin, to move to our second reason, is deadly. That sin is deadly. Friends, sin damns souls.

It is not a light matter. No sin, not even the smallest sin, is of little importance. There's no such thing as a venial sin. A sin that you can just say, oh, it doesn't matter. It's such a tiny little sin, we can just overlook it. No, each sin, one sin, is enough to send someone to hell. And the smallest sin is capable of growing. Sin can kill you. Sin can kill your witness. Sin can kill much of the progress you've made in your sanctification. If you let the smallest sin alone, it will grow.

It'll shoot up. Anyone who has done any gardening knows this. If you leave those few little weeds, like, oh, they're just little weeds. Whatever, you know. Weeds are gonna weed. But if you do that, you come back a week later and those weeds have spread. They've laid down seed. They put out little shoots, like quack grass does. I hate quack grass. It's terrible. You gotta pull that out while it's young. Otherwise, it's gonna spread.

Sin is deadly. And remember, friends, that sin is what sent Christ to the cross. The death of Christ, Christ's sacrifice for your sin does not diminish Sin's importance doesn't diminish sin's deadliness. It underlines it. It highlights it. Because God was unwilling to simply overlook your sin, to deal with your sin, it took God sending his own son to die on a cross. That is how seriously God takes your sin.

It required his son's death to be forgiven. Why do we mortify sin? Because sin is present, because it's deadly. And going back to our old imperative, be what you are, you put sin to death because sin is dead. Because the sin that is in you is dead. The power over sin has been broken in your life, you have died, in the words of Colossians 3, you

have died and your life is hidden with Christ and God. That old nature, that old self, that old Adam is dead. Therefore, get his stuff out of your house.

I'm reading, right now I'm reading Harry Potter for the first time. It's been a fun experience. I never got to read that as a kid. Plenty of people tell me, you gotta read Harry Potter, Hunter. If you wanna understand your generation, you need to read Harry Potter. And that's true. Harry Potter actually is, I think it's the most read work in English just below the Bible among people my age. It's incredible. And as I've been reading the fifth book in the series, one of the scenes that really grabbed me was the scene where Harry is staying with his sort of adoptive dad.

His name is Sirius Black. Yeah, that's a serious name right there, Sirius Black. That sounds like a villain name. But yeah, his nice friend Sirius Black, whose family used to be a bunch of dark wizards, they're all dead now, but Sirius is living in that house, and he's been trying to clean it up.

Because his old mother, this wicked person, is dead, She's obviously not the head of the house anymore. Sirius is the head of the house now. But all that dark wizard stuff, all of his little monsters, all of his evil artifacts, they're still in the house.

And what Harry and Sirius end up doing for weeks on end is cleaning out the house piece by piece, bit by bit, getting the remains of that woman's stuff out of the house. That's a good picture, actually, of mortification. Mortification is removing that old stuff out. Why? Because the owner of the house is dead. The old owner of that house is dead. You are the owner of the house now in Christ. You are in Christ. You are a new person. Get the old Adam's stuff out of your house. Be what you are.

We mortify sin because sin is surely still present, it's deadly, and the old man is dead. So that's why we mortify. Now, what is it that we mortify? How do we identify this stuff? What kind of stuff do we need to get out of here? Well, first of all, sinful deeds, sinful actions. Paul lists several of them here. One of the most troublesome, one of the most important ones we could list is sinful habits. All of us have bad habits. And those can be some of the most destructive sorts of sins. The occasional sin that flares up, that's bad enough. But a sinful habit in your life, a life rhythm that you know is displeasing to God, that's gonna kill you. That's going to destroy you at some point if you don't remove it.

They say, sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny. Habit is pretty far down that line. Rooted out. Sinful actions. But sinful actions with your hands aren't the only thing. There's also sinful words. Paul lists several of them here. Filthy language, lies, gossip.

He says, don't lie to one another, but speak the truth in love. One of the ways we can guard against sin is to guard our mouths, to guard what we say. Obviously it should be further than that, but we should make sure we are looking at the way we speak. Because if we speak in a certain way, that is going to lead to us acting in a certain way.

I don't like that person. We get home from church on Sunday or from work. For those of you, for the men in the congregation this morning, you're sort of venting to your wives. I grew up in a house. Mom and dad sometimes thought I couldn't hear them. I was set up in the loft. I heard plenty of that. I know the way it goes.

Watch what you say. Because you sow what you say, you will reap in action. And your words themselves are also sin. Just because you don't do it doesn't mean it's not sinful. To say it, that's still wrong. Gossip. Sometimes it masquerades as prayer requests. Watch out. Before you say something, think, is this helpful? Is this right? Is it true? Do I know it's true? Is it necessary? Do I have to say this thing? Keep it in mind. Sinful deeds, sinful words, sinful thoughts, sinful thoughts.

What do you dwell on? What do you think about? What sort of fantasies do you have? What do you imagine? How is your thought life? Sins begin with those thoughts. They begin with us dwelling on it, playing with it in our minds before it becomes an action. Watch what you think, watch what you dwell on. Set your minds, as Paul says here, on things above, not on things on the earth. Do you have covetous thoughts?

Resenting someone for having something you don't. Or being angry with God because he isn't giving you the thing that you want. Sinful thoughts. And all of this really goes down to the heart of the issue. That is our sinful hearts, our sinful desires. Desires are where it all begins. Why do we think sins? Why do we have sinful thoughts? Why do we do sinful things? Why do we say sinful things?

Because ultimately, we want to. That's where our desires are. That's where it all begins, in our desires. So if you want to root out sin, get at the root. Look for those sinful desires. Look, why did I do that thing? Why did I say that thing? What is the heart issue? What is it that I'm grasping for, wanting, desiring that is sinful? What is the idol?

That's how you get at the heart of the issue. Rip out those roots. So that's what we look for. We look for these sinful desires from which spring these thoughts, words, actions. But how do we do it? How do we go about mortifying sin? What's the how-to? Well, Well, there's a few things. Put them under three major headings. What a shocker. I like threes. First, watch. Watch for them.

You can't do anything about the sin in your life if you aren't watching for it. If you aren't examining. Now, we need to be careful here. We don't want to be so obsessed looking at ourselves to the point that we stop looking to Christ. To the point we start looking at ourselves so much, we say, oh, I'm such a sinner. Oh, I'm so terrible. Oh, look at all these sinful desires. I just can't do anything about it. And we forget to look at Jesus. Look at His righteousness, His strength, His power.

For every one look at yourself, do 10 looks to Christ. Nevertheless, you do need to look at yourself. You do need to examine yourself. That's part of your preparation for taking the Lord's Supper. Look at your own heart and life. Look at where those sins are taking root.

Watch yourself. Be on the lookout. Jesus says this over and over again in the Gospels. Watch out. Be watchful. Look over your life. Because you have an adversary. He would love to devour you like a roaring lion. Watch out. Be on the watchtower. Watch that you may not enter into temptation. Think of the words of Psalm 139, the way it ends. After David has praised God for his attributes, for his omnipresence, for his omniscience, he knows everything, he can do anything, he is everywhere. How does he end?

Search me, oh God. Know my heart, heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, anything I'm doing or saying. And lead me in the way everlasting. Is that your prayer? God, show me my sin. That's the only way we can really do it. So we need to watch. And what do we do when we identify a sin? What do we do when we find that heart desire, that idol, however small it might be? We confess quickly. We confess quickly.

Don't rationalize it. Don't excuse it. Don't say, well, is it actually really sinful? I mean, it just seems like a natural thing. No. Confess it quickly. Don't rationalize it. Don't wait until you're sorer. Don't identify the sin and be like, oh, I guess that's sin.

Oh, but am I really sorry enough for it? I gotta go dwell on that for a while. Really think about it, really dive into it, delve into my soul and make sure I'm really, really sorry before I bring that to God. No. Could my tear, remember the words of Rock of Ages cleft for me? Could my zeal know respite? No. Could my tears forever flow? Your repentance is not what makes God forgive you. God's forgiveness is not dependent on a certain amount of repentance.

It is necessitated. It is brought to you by even a single little bit of repentance. That's what you need. And how much repentance do you need? Enough to turn around. Enough to bring it to God. That's what you need. Therefore, confess quickly. Because if you don't confess it quickly, if you don't bring it to God quickly, it's going to get worse.

When you have a problem, like say you think you might have skin cancer, we'll go with that. Do you like say, okay, wow, that looks pretty bad. Let me see if I can clean this up first. Let me say, really make sure I can get this as good as I can before I take it to the doctor. No, you bring it to the doctor because he's the one who can actually fix it. That's like sin. You bring that to God right away. He wants to see it. He already knows it. Confess quickly.

And third, you run or remove it. You run or remove. Run or remove. What does Paul say about sexual immorality? Flee. Flee sexual immorality. What that means practically is run away from any situation where that temptation will be there again. You run away, you flee, you get out of there. The example of Joseph leaving the coat in the hands of Potiphar's wife.

Lead us not into temptation, means we don't want to be in temptation. If we're going to ask God to not lead us into temptation, we better make sure that we're not running into temptation. Flee it or remove it. If there's an area of your life, a habit that you have, an action you commonly take, something you're a part of, something you do with your free time, that is an occasion to sin, it may not be sinful in itself, it may be a fine thing, but you know that for you it is a temptation to sin.

Cut it off, throw it from you. For in the words of Jesus, it is better to enter the kingdom lame, to enter the kingdom without an eye, to enter the kingdom without a hand, than for your whole body to be thrown into the fires of hell. You run from it, or you cut it off. That's what mortification looks like, and it's painful. That's why it's called mortification, putting to death, because sometimes it feels like you're dying. Mortification. But mortification is not the only part of the rhythm.

Yes, we need to put off, but we also need to put on. God doesn't want us going around naked. He wants us to put off the sinful, the sin, to put to death the sin, to get the old stuff out of the house, but also to get the new stuff in the house, to put on the new robe and to be made more alive in Jesus Christ. Why? Why is it so important not just to mortify sin, but also to vivify, to make alive Christ in us? Why is that so important?

Well, because first, We've put something to death. We have mortified. The thing is, nature abhors a vacuum. You know, when I moved here, and still to this day, if I could press a button and just eliminate all snakes on the planet, just turn them all to dust Thanos style, you know, just snap the finger and they're all gone. I would do it without a second thought. I hate those things. All of them. Kill them all.

But I still understand that because we live in a world where snakes exist, some are better than others. And I'd rather have a king snake in my yard than a cottonmouth, right? And why do you all like king snakes? Why do you say, oh, don't kill the king snakes? Because they keep the bad snakes away, right? They're a non-aggressive, non-venomous snake, and they keep the bad snakes away. If you kill the king snake, what happens? bad snake might move in.

And that works in reverse too. You kill the bad snake, you gotta get something else living in there. And that's true in your life too. If you're gonna kick a bad habit, if you're gonna get rid of sin, you need to replace it. There has to be something that replaces that with good.

Nature abhors a vacuum. Jesus tells a parable about this. He talks about the man who had the demon in him. And he made his cast out and wanders the waterless places. And then it says, I'll go, wow, this kind of stinks, so I'm gonna go back to the house I came from. He goes back there, he sees the house, it's clean, it's put in order, but it's still vacant. So what does he do? He gets seven of his buddies together, and they all enter the house together, and the last state of the man is worse than the first.

If you want your mortification to stick, You need to vivify. You need to have Christ who made alive in you. Why do you vivify? Because of mortification. Also because we are alive. Be what you are. All of this is true of you in Christ. You are righteous in Christ. You have the Holy Spirit. You have a new heart. Act like it.

What we're asked to do, notification, we're asked to put on is what's natural to us now. Sin is what is unnatural to us in Christ. What is natural to us in Christ, what is fitting for us in Christ, is now the righteousness of Christ in our deeds, in our actions, in the way we live our life, in our good habits. Why do we vivify? Because of mortification, because it's fitting, because it's who we are, but also because we love Christ. Do you love Jesus Christ? Do you love him for what he's done for you? Do you love Jesus Christ? Jesus says, if you love me, keep my commandments.

Honestly, that should be enough. If we love Jesus Christ, We will do what he says. We vivify because we love Christ. But we vivify, we bring these things to life in us. We bring Christ to life in us. We put on Christ because Christ loves us. He loves us. Did you know that God is far more interested in your sanctification than you are? He is. And praise God, He is. Our love ebbs and flows. Our zeal for sanctification. It might be high today, it'll be lower tomorrow. It might be high on Tuesday, down to the dumps Wednesday. But God's is steady.

God is determined to sanctify you. Paul says to the Philippians, I am confident that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Christ will sanctify you. That is why you need to be sanctified, because Christ has a vested interest in it. He will sanctify you.

So that's why we vivify, but what are we to put on? What does this look like? Well, if our mortification meant putting off these sinful thoughts, actions, heart, and so forth, then vivification, putting on Christ, means putting on Christ's actions. There's the old wristbands they used to sell back in the old ancient days of the 60s. I'm gonna make you feel old for a second. 1960 was 40 years before I was born. There you go. But yeah, y'all remember the bracelets from that time though. I know enough to know about the bracelets. WWJD, what would Jesus do? There's some truth there. Yeah, it did. It did. It came back. Yeah, it did. I heard about it. Yeah.

What would Jesus do? And that, to a certain extent, is correct. Now, Jesus had a different calling than we have. He was destined to die for sin. That makes his life a little bit different than ours. But he still is our great example. According to Peter, he left as an example that we might follow in his steps. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of faith. He is our faith.

We put on his righteousness and we put on his righteous, first of all, his righteous heart. Look at your own heart, your own desires. Are those the kind of desires that Jesus would have? Are those his heart? Your thoughts, are those Jesus's thoughts? Are they the kind of thoughts that Christ would have? Your words, your deeds.

I love old country songs. One of my favorites is, I'm Seeing My Father in Me, and y'all know the chorus. ♪ I'm seeing my father in me. ♪ You know how it goes. I notice I walk the way he walks. I notice I talk the way he talks. I guess that's how it's meant to be. I'm seeing my father in me, right? That's how it's meant to be for the Christian. Do your words, do your actions remind you of your father? Do they remind you of Christ, your older brother?

Yeah. So we're to vivify what? Our hearts, our thoughts, our words, and our actions. How do we do this? How do we bring these things to life? How do we actually put these things on? First and foremost, how do we put on that heart? How do we get these Christ-like desires?

Well, to begin with, that's what the new heart is all about. You have that new heart. Jesus has given you that new heart if you're a believer. If you're truly in Christ, then you will have these desires if you look into your own heart and life. Yes, those sinful desires will still be there, but they're diminishing. The heart of Christ is what is king. Look into your heart, look into your desires. you will find that heart of Christ because you have received a new heart if you are truly in Christ. But you may say, but those desires, they seem weak, they seem ineffective. How do I make those

desires strong? How do I nurture those desires so that they grow? If I'm putting to death the old desires, how do I make these alive?

Well, ultimately, you look to Christ. Friends, we don't just look to Christ for our justification. We look to him for our sanctification. He is the source of life. We'll get into this more next week. But what did Jesus say to his disciples? I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. It is through Christ, through his strength, through his zeal, through his righteousness, that we grow in our sanctification, that we bear fruit.

But then you say, well, Hunter, we all know that that sounds really trite. Look to Christ, look to him. How does it actually, how do I actually do that? What does that actually look like practically? What are the means by which I get Christ? I got good news.

The means of Christ, the means to Christ are the means of grace. The means to Christ are the means of grace. We talk in this congregation a lot about the ordinary means of grace. These means of grace do not exist apart from Christ, as though Christ saves us, gives us these means, and then gets out of the room, skedaddles on to the next person that needs saving. No, the means of grace are the way by which we are connected to Christ.

That is how he pours those new desires into us, how he nurtures those desires. He does so through the ordinary means. What are the ordinary means? First and foremost, the word of God. It is the word of God that nurtures those new desires. So if you want those desires nurtured, be in the word, be in it preached, be in it privately, memorize it, meditate on it, that is your primary means of hearing from Christ, of having those desires nurtured, is how God does it. The means of grace are the means to Christ.

But you say, well, Hunter, Hunter, that's great, that's awesome, I love the Bible, but I wish I had something tactile, something I could touch, something I could do that could do something for that. The words, it's ethereal, it's great, it's wonderful, but I wish I had something physical. Well, I got good news for you too.

That's what the sacraments are. The sacraments are that same word, that same nurturing word, that same means to Christ made physical. So when you take that cup, when you take that bread, and you truly believe in Jesus Christ, you trust in him, you feed on Christ. And those desires, those Christ-like desires are nurtured, they're built up. What else is a means of grace? Prayer. How do you make it a part of your private life? You pray without ceasing. Does God need our prayers? No, you need your prayers. They're a part of our sanctification.

You see how it all fits together? Union with Christ is this great unifying doctrine, isn't it? It takes all these things in the Christian life, all these things that we already kinda know about, and puts them all together. That is the glory of this doctrine. So, what is the rhythm of this union with Christ? We gotta mortify sin, we gotta put it to death. Why? It's deadly. It's still in us. It's dead, get that stuff out of the house. What's the stuff?

Well, our sinful actions, words, thoughts, ultimately, our own sinful hearts. Those desires need to be put to death, laid aside, confessed. And then we gotta put on, don't we? We have to put on Jesus Christ. We have to make alive Christ in us. Nature pours a vacuum. Get sin out, get Christ in. Christ's thoughts, Christ's heart, Christ's actions. How do we do it? It means he's given us. He's given us everything we need in the Word and the sacraments, in fellowship, in prayer.

Now, these things might seem, wow, that's pretty ordinary, pretty mundane. Well, that's good news too. Because I don't know about you, I'm a pretty ordinary guy. Pretty mundane person. If mortification and vivification were this great supernatural thing that only the really, really cool Christians could do, I wouldn't have much hope, would I? You certainly wouldn't have much hope. I did. I wouldn't. None of us would.

Only the really cool people would. but praise God that these things come through the ordinary means, which means they're accessible for ordinary people. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you that you give us ordinary means, that this sanctification rhythm, this mortification, vivification, if we look back on our lives, we can see you've already been doing this, even if we weren't conscious of it. You are faithful in doing this work. Lord, help us now as we have seen this, since we know what this rhythm is, that we might put it into practice more. We might embrace it, make it a part of our daily routines. For all this in Jesus' name, amen.