

Series: *Colossians: The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ*
Part 2: *Living out the Sufficiency of Christ (chapters 3-4)*
Lesson: *All Wrapped Up In Jesus, Part 2 – Our Behavior*
Text: **Colossians 3:5-11 (L10)**
Date: **Sunday, March 18, 2012**

*Colonial Hills
ABF
Baptist Church*

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

It has been brought to my attention that the volume level in the Round Table ABF Department has been slowly increasing. While this is to be expected, due to the multiple teachers simultaneously teaching and the additional discussion from the participants, we want to do whatever we can to minimize this distraction. Therefore, please keep in mind a couple of considerations for the upcoming weeks: (1) please face away from the center of the room and toward an outside wall when you teach—this will help your voice carry to those at your table and away from those who need to listen to someone else; (2) please just be conscious of the volume level at your table, especially during the first 10-15 minutes of fellowship; (3) please work with your table leader to create an environment of appropriate volume.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Colossians 3:12-17 – *All Wrapped up in Jesus, Part 3 – Our Local Church*

INTRODUCTION

In Part 2 of Paul's epistle to the Colossians, Paul begins to apply our firm belief in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ to our daily lives. We can summarize this application with one thought: wrap yourself up in Jesus.

The WILDS Christian Camp and Conference Center in Brevard, NC summarizes their counseling philosophy with a pithy saying: "You do what you do and you say what you say because you think what you think; you think what you think because you believe what you believe about God, about His Word, and about yourself." This philosophy is very biblically grounded and finds a firm foundation in many of Paul's epistles. In fact, this statement forms a great outline for Paul's letter to the Colossians, with just one adjustment: "You do what you do and you say what you say (3:5-4:6) because you think what you think (3:1-4); you think what you think because you believe what you believe about Jesus Christ (1:1-2:23)." We spent a significant amount of time focusing on what we believe about Christ (1:1-2:23) and on how that affects our thinking or mindset (3:1-4). Today, we begin to consider how that belief and mindset adjusts what we do and say personally and in our interactions with people (3:5-4:6). As our life (1:1-2:23) and heart (3:1-4) are wrapped up in Jesus, so should be our behavior (3:5-4:6).

If Jesus doesn't have our heart, He probably doesn't have our behavior, either. If He does have our heart, then He is transforming our behavior, as we cooperate with His grace in discipleship (cf. Titus 2). It's been widely noted, "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character reap a destiny." Those who are wrapped up in Jesus cannot afford to be cavalier about their behavior. We must focus on our behavior as a microcosm of who we are, and work to see our practice match our profession, that our entire lives might give credence to a Christ who is sufficient to save.

In Colossians 3:5-11, Paul addresses our own personal behavior, before really dealing with our interactions with people. In the isolation of our home, in the solitude of our car, in the secrets of our thoughts, in the obscurity of our business trips, in the anonymity of the web—in the aloneness of our privacy—we must wrap up our behavior in Jesus. In order to emphasize the importance of focusing on our behavior, Paul explains the reasons to focus on behavior, the radical nature of this focus, and the results of such a focus.

THE REASONS TO FOCUS ON YOUR BEHAVIOR (vv. 5-7)

Paul provides three reasons to focus on our behavior.

1. *Some behavior is inferior (v. 5)*

In verse 5, Paul commands, "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." We'll talk about those first two words later, but let's consider the last phrase—"your members which are upon the earth." These "earth"-ly "members" or behaviors are in connection with the "earth"-ly things of verse 2 that are to be turned away from in our heavenly pursuits and mindset (vv. 1-2). "The things on the earth" are obviously inferior objects when compared to the invisible, spiritual, and eternal things—the heavenly and utmost realities that we are to stay our minds upon. Likewise, the behavior that flows from an "earth"-ly mindset will be likewise inferior to heavenly behavior. To illustrate, this passage compares a heavenly citizen



Much of the discussion for this lesson will come in the next point, where we consider some practical applications in our focus on our behavior. To get discussion started, use this point to have your students fill out their own outlines. For example, before giving them this first subpoint, ask, "In the first phrase of verse 5 ('Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth'), what reason is Paul giving for why we should focus on our behavior? What word should be put in this blank?" You may also want to give them a hint by drawing their attention to the word "earth" and telling them to look for a contextual connection. You can take this same approach to the other two subpoints.

who practices earthly behavior to the madness of David before the Philistines (I Samuel 21), the insanity of Nebuchadnezzar within his own kingdom (Daniel 4), or the foolishness of a royal heir who chooses baseness.

2. *Some behavior is injurious (v. 6)*

Of the behavior listed in verse 5 (and we assume the same is true of the list in verses 8-9a), Paul writes, "For [these] things' sake, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." This verse echoes the sobering reality of Romans 1:18, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Some behavior bears the price tag of God's wrath, and there is no clearance rack where this cost is diminished. Professing believers who continue in such injurious behavior demonstrate that they may still be in danger, as those described as "workers of iniquity" in Matthew 7:21-23 discover. Believers ought to be children of obedience, but when they engage in disobedience, they participate in that which brings the anger of Almighty God—either in judgment (Romans 2:5) or in chastening (Hebrews 12:5-6).

3. *Some behavior is inconsistent (v. 7)*

Paul reminds the Colossians that some behavior is completely inconsistent with their current status "in Christ." The sexual and verbal sins of verses 5 and 8-9a characterize those who "live in them."¹ Those who live in that realm—represented by Adam and the old man, characterized by sin and separation, destined for wrath and separation—will naturally "walk" or behave or live that way. Believers no longer live in that realm; we live in a new sphere, as we will see more fully later—one that is represented by Christ and the new man, characterized by righteousness and a relationship, destined for life and joy. We "some time" (i.e., "then," "formerly," "once") lived in the former realm, "but now" (cf. v. 8) we are citizens of a far better kingdom. Therefore, to live in one realm, but practice the lifestyle of another, is to be inconsistent. One's practice should prove his position.²

¹ Some modern translations translate this verse in a sense like, "You used to practice these things when you lived among them" (e.g., NET), interpreting "them" to be referring, not to the sins, but to the children of disobedience. I do not favor this interpretation, because we still live among the children of disobedience, but no longer do we live "in" the realm of those sins. This is the contrast Paul is emphasizing.

² **Quotation:** "Christian, what hast thou to do with sin? *Hath it not cost thee enough already?* Burnt child, wilt thou play with the fire? What! when thou hast already been between the jaws of the lion, wilt thou step a second time into his den? Hast thou not had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all thy veins once, and wilt thou play upon the hole of the asp, and put thy hand upon the cockatrice's den a second time? Oh, be not so mad! so foolish! Did sin ever yield thee real pleasure? Didst thou find solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to thine old drudgery, and wear the chain again, if it delight thee. But inasmuch as sin did never give thee what it promised to bestow, but deluded thee with lies, be not a second time snared by the old fowler—be free, and let the remembrance of thy ancient bondage forbid thee to enter the net again!" (Charles Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening* [reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], p. 151, quoted in John MacArthur. *Colossians*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996. Pp. 141-42.)

Application: On the one hand, behavior is not the biggest deal, because it can mask what’s really going on in the heart; on the other hand, for a host of other reasons, behavior is a big deal. If you believe that Christ is sufficient, then He will be a sufficient delight to your heart, and He will be a sufficient standard for your conduct.

Transition: You and I are wise to focus on our behavior, because some behavior is inferior, injurious, and inconsistent—these are the reasons to focus on our behavior. Paul builds upon those reasons by commanding that such a focus be radical in its activity.

THE RADICAL FOCUS ON YOUR BEHAVIOR (vv. 5-10)

The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines “radical” as “relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something; far-reaching or thorough.” This is indeed the type of focus that Paul commands in this passage—nothing less than a radical cooperation with Christ in the transformation of our behavior into conformity with the new man, which is typified in Christ. Paul’s radical command has three components.

1. **Attack your sin (vv. 5a, 8a).**


The two imperatives used by Paul are both intensely active—he wants us to strap on our armor and do battle royal against whatever remains of our previous selves in our behavior. He calls us to go on the offensive and attack our sin. Paul first instructs us to “mortify” our earthly behaviors (v. 5). This word means to “put to death.”³ He doesn’t give any further instruction concerning what this looks like or how to do this until his second imperative in verse 8 (and verse 12). Thus, this imperative probably serves more to underline the earnestness with which we must fight against sins in our lifestyle. It’s not enough to mourn our sins, to hate our sins, to dispise our sins, to pray for deliverance from our sins, to try to avoid sins, etc. We must put our sins to death.

Illustration: As we would be aggressive and proactive to kill off any poisonous snakes in our backyard that would threaten the well-being of our children, so we must regularly practice our “license to kill” our sins. Or, as MacArthur writes so vigorously, “Putting sin to death, then, is not optional in the Christian life. The


³ “Paul... is not advocating the very asceticism he condemned in chapter 2 [e.g., actually harming ourselves physically]... Paul uses a figure of speech known as metonymy. When he speaks of killing bodily parts or members, Paul is actually referring to the sins associated with those members. It should be noted that this hits at the Colossian dualism regarding body and spirit. Paul is saying that the body should be holy, under the control of the redeemed spirit. The body does what the inner disposition compels it to do—and a Spirit-controlled body must do what is good. This will happen until the day when the body will be redeemed (Rom. 8:23)” (MacArthur, p. 136.).

Puritan Richard Baxter wrote, “Use sin as it will use you; spare it not, for it will not spare you; it is your murderer, and the murderer of the world: use it, therefore, as a murderer should be used. Kill it before it kills you; and though it bring you to the grave, as it did your Head, it shall not be able to keep you there.”⁴

Paul’s second imperative gives a bit more practical instruction concerning how to put our sins to death. He exhorts us in verse 8 to “put off” sins of behavior. This word refers to taking off and laying aside a garment. This command is complemented by the injunction to “put on” certain virtues in verse 12 and following. “Putting on” also refers to the act of dressing, teaching us that we should change clothes spiritually in our behavior, taking off the filthy garments of the old man and clothing ourselves in the garments of Christ. As we sow the action of putting off sins and putting on righteousnesses, we will reap a habit of dressing from such a new wardrobe; such a habit will reap a lifestyle of godly behavior.⁵ So, Paul seems to be teaching that “putting off” + “putting on” = “putting to death” our sin.

 What are some ways that we can actively fight against our sins, “putting them to death” by habitually “putting them off” and “putting on” righteous behavior in their place? (1) *confession of sin* (1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13); (2) *denial of self*—“putting on the brakes” or saying “no” to flesh (Titus 2:11-12; Daniel 1:8 – **Illustration:** to the pastor who quoted James as he went to commit adultery it was exclaimed, “Don’t quote James; turn the wheel!”); (3) “*radical amputation*”—“cutting off the fuel” or hating not only the sin but also the temptation (Matthew 5:29-30; Romans 13:14; II Timothy 2:22); (4) *putting on replacement behavior*—this is often forgotten (I Timothy 6:11)

We fail to earnestly and actively “fight” against sin (cf. I Timothy 6:12) in several ways. (1) We may willingly engage in a sin, because we know that it will be forgiven and we fail to really preach to ourselves the nature of transforming grace—that it doesn’t excuse sin, but rather dominates it (cf. Romans 5:18-6:12). (2) We may fail to war against sin, because we’ve ignorantly made a treaty with the enemy

 Why do we fail to actively fight against or attack our sins in this way? How do we demonstrate an inactive approach to “Jesus wrapped” behavior? See paragraph.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵ **Illustration:** “You can tell a lot about people in our society by the way they dress. From baseball players to bus drivers, from postal carriers to policemen, people wear the uniform of their profession. Who we are determines what we wear, and failing to “dress the part” can sometimes have embarrassing consequences. Many years ago a very wealthy man in a Southern California town was found wandering around the local country club wearing shabby clothes. He was promptly seized by security guards and charged with vagrancy—even though he owned the country club. He had failed to dress consistent with who he was. That is precisely Paul’s point in 3:9–17. Christians must dress themselves spiritually in accordance with their new identity” (*Ibid.*, p. 144.).

by overlooking the seriousness of sin—we love our sin more than our Savior. (3) We disobey Paul’s command to “mortify” and “put off” sin when we excuse it under the headings of “disease,” “syndrome,” “gender issue,” “environmental product,” “disadvantaged,” etc. (4) We may be weak in our battle with sin because we fail to fight according to God’s plans, trying instead to morally reform our own lifestyle apart from the power of the indwelling Christ. (5) We may passively regard our sin, because we misunderstand our responsibility in sanctification—wanting to avoid the error of legalistic self-effort, or being drawn to the “freedoms” of those who abuse grace, we opt to passively wait for God to work in and change us. God does certainly work in and change those who are His—that’s His covenant commitment to them. However, He has ordained to do so in cooperation with their effort—“the grace of God...[is] teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

2. **Focus on both the motive and the act (vv. 5, 8-9a).**

Paul provides two lists of sins in this passage that are not meant to be exhaustive. Perhaps he listed these sins, because he had learned from Pastor Epaphras that these were the sins the Colossian believers struggled with or that they were being confronted with in their secular culture. Whatever the reason for which he chose these sins, the lists are instructive for us in that they target two habitual “problem areas” and they demonstrate our need to “kill” both the motive and the act of ungodly behavior.

The first list (v. 5) deals with sins of sexual morality, starting with the ungodly acts and ending with the ungodly motives. An ungodly heart of idolatrous sexual greed (i.e., “covetousness, which is idolatry”) will occupy the mind in shameful passion and evil desires (i.e., “inordinate affection, evil concupiscence”) and will flow out in behaviors of immorality and impurity (i.e., “fornication, uncleanness”). On every level—in the idols of the heart, the motives of the mind, and the expressions of the hand—we must attack our sin by putting it off and replacing it with a Christ-centered lifestyle.

The second list (vv. 8-9a) deals with sins of anger, beginning with the evil motives and finishing with the harmful behaviors. The first three sins listed—“anger, wrath, malice”—depict the sins of the heart that naturally reap sins of the mouth—“blasphemy, filthy communication” and lying. Once again, we must do battle against both the sins of the heart and the sins of the hand, both the sins of thought and behavior, the motives and the act.

3. **Preach to yourself (vv. 5, 9-10).**

As is Paul’s practice, he ties imperatives to indicatives, commands to doctrine. His regular use of “therefore” demonstrates this pattern (cf. Romans 12:1;

Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 3:1). Paul was a master at preaching to Himself the realities of “Christ who is your life” and finding in those sermons the motivation, empowerment, and reason to obey. Paul does this in two places in verses 5-11.

a. **Verse 5 – “Therefore”...because of verses 1-4**

Verses 5-11 are actually the application of the sermon he preaches in verses 1-4. Verse 5 begins with “therefore” and continues with a command. Paul writes that because of your position, your priority, and your prospect, you should put to death your earth-ly sins, allowing your “Jesus wrapped” heart to produce a “Jesus wrapped” lifestyle. The sins of verses 5, 8-9a don’t fit with the heavenly orientation of a true believer. The truth of our identity with Christ is a sermon with practical application.

b. **Verses 9-10 – “Seeing that you have put off the old man...and have put on the new man” [...“therefore,” v. 12]**

The second mini-sermon that Paul preaches is in verses 9-10, 12f. In these verses, he again reminds the reader of who he is “in Christ.” His two past tense participles remind us that we have already “put off” the old man and its “deeds” or behaviors and have already “put on” the new man. This “new man” is further described by a present tense participle that repeats the internal aspect of transformation. The “new man” “is [being] renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”⁶ “Paul’s point, then, is that Christians should take off their dirty clothing (inappropriate behavior) and put on clean clothing (behavior consistent with knowing Christ) because this has already been accomplished in a positional sense at the time of their conversion (cf. Gal 3:27 with Rom 13:14).”⁷ In other words, with a chiasmic⁸ outline he preaches that we should put off certain behavior (v. 8) and put on other behavior (v. 12f) because we have already put off sin (v. 9) and put on righteousness (v. 10). We should become who we are! This is the continuation of salvation, or, we could say, Jesus’ recreation.

⁶ “The image of its Creator (cf. Gn. 1:27), in the light of 1:15 where Christ is praised as ‘the image of God’, means that God’s recreation of humanity is ‘in the pattern of Christ, who is God’s Likeness absolutely’ (C. F. D. Moule). There is a similar idea in Rom. 8:29 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:49) where the Christian’s change is ‘into the image of Christ’” (Carson, D. A. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. 4th Ed. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994. Colossians 3:5–11.). Also, “William Hendriksen writes, ‘When a man is led through the waters of salvation, these are ankle-deep at first, but as he progresses, they become knee-deep, then reach to the loins, and are finally impassable except by swimming (cf. Ezek. 47:3–6)’ (*Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], p. 150). There is no growth in the Christian life apart from knowledge” (MacArthur, p. 148.).

⁷ Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible*. 1st Ed. Biblical Studies Press, 2006.

⁸ “A rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form; e.g. ‘Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds’” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*).

THE RESULTS OF FOCUSING ON YOUR BEHAVIOR (v. 11)

Verse 11 shares two results of a “Christ wrapped” behavior. The new humanity that Jesus is recreating in verse 10 accomplishes two things.

1. **Unity in Christ**
2. **Glory to Christ**

In this new humanity, whose prototype is Jesus Christ, there is no gender strife, no ethnic hierarchy, no racial division, no religious strata, no societal classes, no personality cliques. Christ is the unifying cord, as He completely wraps us up in His life, enrapturing our hearts and directing our behavior. This is the church, the body of Christ, who is our Head, even as we are His one unified body.

Application: Therefore, part of having our behavior wrapped up in Jesus means that our behavior towards others will reflect this unity, putting aside prejudice, judgmentalism, and disdain—the manmade barriers of race, culture, economic status, personality, social ranking, etc.—and practicing the unity of Christ, who is “all and in all” (cf. Ephesians 2:13-16).¹⁰ In fact, this is where Paul goes in 3:12ff—focusing on practicing our relationships within the unity of Christ-wrapped interactions. Furthermore, the list of sins in verses 5, 8-9a will directly challenge and disintegrate this unity and worship, and thus we discover here another reason why we should focus on our behavior.

CONCLUSION

If our destiny is to be recreated into the image of Christ unto the glory of God, then our behavior is important. After all, “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character reap a destiny.” As our life is already wrapped up with Jesus (1:1-2:23), so should be our heart (3:1-4) and behavior (3:5-4:6). Cooperate with Christ in His salvation, by aggressively dealing with that behavior which undermines His sufficiency and blasphemes His glory. Wrap yourself up in Jesus Christ!

Illustration: Consider the following transparent illustration of how someone learned to practice this point: “I once confessed a wrongful desire to a friend of mine, and I explained that, frustratingly, my theology knew it was wrong, but part of me was tempted to justify it because it felt ‘woven into the very fabric of my person’ and ‘part of the very wiring of my soul.’ Those were the words I used to explain how much the desire felt like *me*.

My friend, sweetly, simply quoted Ephesians 4 to me: ‘put off *your old self*, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.’ And he emphasized ‘your old self’ like that. Yes, it’s true that such desires may be woven or wired into my very person. You’re old self is corrupt. What did you expect, Jonathan? Those desires, in one sense, are *me*.

Ah, but there was good news just around the corner. My friend finished the passage: but ‘be *renewed* in the spirit of your minds...and put on the *new self*, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.’ Wait a second, I have a new self, don’t I? There is an old me, sure, but there is also a new me. And this new me is being created...hold on, get this...after the likeness of God.

In short, my friend reminded me of my conversion with a few choice words from Scripture. And where my mood had been melancholic that day, fueled by the frustration of wanting something I couldn’t have, his reminder restored my joy. It gave me hope.”⁹



Application: What applications should be gleaned from Paul’s radical sermon to himself and us? (1) *I should be as proactive and aggressive in my fight against behavioral sin as I am in my focus on any other danger;* (2) *I must know Christ, for He is the standard by which and the image into which I am being renewed and transformed;* (3) *I must live by faith in the remembrance of my position—actually dead to sin, alive unto God; the old man has been put off, the new man has been donned—I cannot divorce this lesson from the previous one, for Christ must envelop my heart first and then my behavior;* (4) *I must target my behavior at the root—in my mindset and motives (cf. II Corinthians 10:5-6).*

Transition: Having considered the reasons to focus on our behavior as we wrap ourselves up in Jesus, and having been confronted with the radical nature of such a focus, we finish our study of this passage by delighting ourselves with the results of this focus.

⁹ Leeman, Jonathan. “The Underestimated Pastoral Power of a Proper Doctrine of Conversion,” a blog entry on the *9Marks Blog*, posted February 28, 2012. <http://bit.ly/zLlx9G>

¹⁰ “Here in Col 3:11 it speaks of Christ being the total concern, preoccupation, and environment of the Christian. Like the other occurrences of the phrase, it speaks to the totality of his presence, in contrast to the other distinctions of purely human designation” (Melick, Richard R. Vol. 32, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. Electronic Ed. Logos Library System. *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. P. 299.)