

# Growth in Christ Alone

Our Sufficiency in Christ

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Bible Text: Colossians 3:5-17

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Directions are a beautiful thing aren't they? I am sure most, if not all, of us have had the "I can figure this out on my own moment."

- We buy an awesome doll house or kitchen set for our daughter for Christmas and on Christmas Eve we open the box and realize that it comes in 1,400 pieces. No problem ... got it covered ... we organize the pieces ... begin to plot our strategy ... and get crackin'. About 3 am when our doll house looks like a tornado hit it, we are scrambling for the directions.
- Or we think we know how to get somewhere and then realize that we probably need to grab our phone and get some directions. As we are loading up google maps and typing in an address (after we pulled off on the side of the road!) we are hoping and praying that our GPS tells us that we only 2 minutes from our destination.
- Someone teaches us a new skill. Having step by step directions is especially helpful that first time or two.

God was so gracious and so kind that he gave us directions for Christian Growth ... directions to change ... directions to get to a better place.

- He did not tell us to grow and then leave us to figure it out.
- He gave us a step by step series of directions to help us. The title of this message is "**Growth in Christ Alone.**"

With that in mind please turn in your Bibles to Colossians 3. That is on page \_\_\_\_ of the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you.

As we are turning there I want to remind us:

1. That our theme this year is "**In Christ Alone.**" We want to emphasize the many ways in which Christ has provided for us, the many ways that Christ works in our lives, and the many ways that Christ calls us to respond.
2. In our study Paul prays for the Colossians that they would be Word centered, obedient Christians. By focusing on Christ, all that he is and all that he does and all that he has done specifically for them, then they will please him in all respects by doing the will of the God.

Not only do they have to be on guard against forces from the outside (false teaching) they must deal with the forces from the inside (their own wants and desires). Thus, they need to change.

Read Colossians 3:5-17. This sounds a lot like one of the most sacred passages of Scripture in this church ...

**Ephesians 4:22-24 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.**

While we could describe the text with three points ... put off, renew your mind, and put on. I would like to be a bit more specific and show **5 steps to Growth in Christ Alone**.

### *#1. You must love and appreciate what Christ has done for you*

#### **Colossians 3:5 Therefore ...**

In v. 5 it says “therefore.” This refers back to the promises of Christ. The truths we learned in Colossians 1:1-3:4. Just for sake of time I want to remind you of what I spoke about in Colossians 2:9-15.

- He made us part of his people
- He made us alive together with Christ
- He forgave our sins
- He cancelled our debts
- He granted us victory over our enemies
  - o These truths are a subset of the heavenly things that should occupy our thoughts and actions.

These same ideas are reiterated in our text through the language of the new man.

Why talk about love? Why talk about appreciation? Why talk about giving thanks? Friends, we cannot force someone to love, can we? Love is a choice to give. Sometimes we are not willing to give.

- You cannot force your spouse to love you. No matter how much you argue, present reasons, or extol your virtues ... you cannot force your spouse to give.
- You know that you cannot force your children to love you or to love the things that you love.
  - o They are free moral agents and they develop loves and affections for certain things that might not match your list.

All of us love, or set our affections, on certain things. No matter what arguments people bring, it does not necessarily result in love.

Friends, I understand that just telling you that Jesus died for you ... just telling you that he made all who trust in him part of the people of God ... just telling you that he gave you new life, forgave your sins, or cancelled your debts does not make you love him.

But I am asking that you would. You know that in a marriage one of the key skills is learning to appreciate all that your spouse does for you, for the family, and for the ministry.

- Men ... you have to learn to appreciate your wife's gifts, skills and abilities. You have to appreciate the things that she does. If she does the shopping and the cooking then that is an expression of her love. If she does the laundry than that is an expression of her love.
- Women ... you have to learn to appreciate your husband's gifts, skills, and abilities. You have to appreciate the fact that he has a job. That he works hard and provides. That he helps the children with homework.
- This is part of how you grow as a couple.

Likewise, one of the keys to Christian growth is that you have to love what Jesus has done for you. Your love and appreciation for Christ serves as a motivation to change.

If you treat his blessings like the Pharisees did, then Christ will have very little influence on the moments of your daily life.

- One of the questions that Dr. Smith used to teach us as new counselors was to ask "Where is the Lord in all this?" He was teaching us to ask a very practical question. In your struggles with \_\_\_\_\_, what is God doing?

I want to encourage you to pray silently this morning that the Lord would work in your heart right now. Not just soon, right now. You would appreciate his work and you would set your affections on Christ.

Well, we have covered one word so far ... let's keep going.

## *#2. You must hate the corrupting and destructive influences of sin and idolatry*

Ephesians 4:22 emphasized the ongoing corruption of the new man with the lusts of deceit. This corresponds well to the emphasis in Colossians 3.

**Colossians 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.**

**Colossians 3:8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.**

**Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,**

In verses 5-11 there are three commands (imperatives) that dominate the text.

- They are like runway lights making it obvious where the plane is supposed to land. These imperatives call us to action. This is not a passive set of truths that I am supposed to enjoy.
  - o Colossians 2:8-15 was the passage where we sat in our easy chair and reflected on the grace of God through Christ.
  - o Colossians 3 is no such text.

It is Put to death, put off, do not lie. The classroom instruction is over and it is time for action.

Friends, what does “put to death or put off” really mean? I am convinced that putting to death involves at least two elements. First, you must “hate the corrupting influence” and then we will look next at the need “to repent of your willful participation.” These are implied in the commands.

Let me explain ... “How many of you have been told you need to lose some weight? What about you need to eat right?”

- I know I have a bit more cargo than I used to carry.
  - o I fully understand that my six pack is stored in the back of the cooler. But here is why I am not losing weight.
  - o Because I don’t hate the cooler. At times I traded in my normal cooler for a double wide and that bothered me ... but Doug Gray used to say that as long as he could look down and see his toes he was good to go 😊. I understand what he is saying.
- My suspicion is that my habit of having a bowl of ice cream with peanuts and M&Ms each evening is not part of a healthy diet. I don’t plan on changing that because I don’t hate anything about it.

If you are going to change, not only do you have the love Jesus and appreciate all he has done for you, but you need to hate the corrupting influence of your sin.

Paul lists a few of the sins that plagued the Christian community.

Verse 5 describes five areas of sin and sums them up with the word idolatry. In Paul’s mind idolatry was not just worshipping little Buddha’s in a worship or in a home shrine.

- Idolatry, scripturally speaking, is anything that was more important than Christ.

Immorality: The church has a pornography, adultery, and lust problem. This is not merely an epidemic found in those who have no allegiance to Christ. These issues are clearly found in the church.

- The vast majority of those who sin in these ways know it is wrong. Yet, they continue in it. Why?
- It has become more important than Christ in the mind of the person indulging in it.

But if they are going to come out of it, they have to see what it is doing to them. They have to see its corrupting influence on their thinking and living.

- They have to see that even if the sin is hidden ... it is destroying them from the inside out. They are crushing the relationships around them, even if the other people do not know the reason why.
- They have to hate that destruction.

Greed: Greed is not limited to financial resources. Greed impacts our desire for power, for control, for relationships, and for material possessions. Greed continually offers a promise ... “you will be happy if \_\_\_\_\_.”

Yet, we all know that does not make us happy. Even if we receive power, control, a relationship, a material possession greed will return and tell us the same thing “you will be happy if \_\_\_\_\_.”

It is an idolatrous path and a path that no longer allows us to fulfill God's will in our lives because we are too concerned about fulfilling immorality's will or greed's will.

Idolatry leaves a path of destruction ... it starts with the destruction of our character and moves progressively outward. We have to learn to hate the sin that leads to that corruption.

Paul also gives a couple reasons ...

**A. Because God's wrath is upon those who practice idolatry**

**Colossians 3:6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience**

Paul's point is that it seems very strange that believers would have an interest in engaging in idolatry when idolatry brings the wrath of God.

- In the last 12 months our ABFs studied the book of Revelation. The dichotomy could not have been more clear. God's people doing God's will receive the joys of heaven that are so amazing that they cannot even be fully described.

But those who reject the Lord endure suffering on the grandest scale imaginable.

Why would we, as believers in Jesus, want to indulge in something that is common for those who do not know Christ? Why would we want to join in worshipping something that deserves a one way ticket to hell?

**B. Because we exchanged the old way of life for a new one**

**Colossians 3:7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.**

**Colossians 3:10-11 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— 11 *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.***

This second reason is related to the first. We were confronted with a choice. When we heard the message of the gospel we had to decide.

- Do I believe that I am a sinner?
- Do I believe that my sin is worthy of the wrath of God?
- Do I believe that I need to trust in the D/B/R of Jesus?

The day we answered those questions "yes" was the day we exchanged the old for the new. It was the day that we were made alive with Christ.

- [Give the gospel]

Friends, the idea that we would indulge in the sins of our past is just as crazy

- As our 6 year old who starts sucking their thumb. They gave that up years ago.

- As a person who successfully completed Calculus only to sign up for a class on arithmetic. They did that years ago.
- As a person who decided to crawl after they learned to walk.

Paul explains that I should want to hate my sin because God's wrath is upon those who reject Christ and live like this and because I set that aside. I gave that up when I asked for Christ.

I want to encourage you right now to write down on your notes the two sins you struggle with the most.

- Maybe it is a form of immorality ... maybe it is your anger that goes from 1 to 100 in 1 second ... maybe it is your filthy mouth ... maybe it is your lying ... maybe it is the negative way you talk about other people.

Then, I want you to think how that sin continues to corrupt you (making it easier to do the next time). Think about how that sin is what brings the wrath of God on those who disobey the gospel. Think about how contrary to the new man these sins are.

Learn to hate them. Learn to hate what they produce in your life.

Go back to v. 8

- Sinful anger ... where has it taken you? What has it accomplished?
- Slander ... speaking ill of other people... what has that accomplished?
- Abusive speech ... what has that done to your relationships? What has been accomplished?

These things destroy relationships. We avoid these people in Meijer. They put in 3D our hypocrisy. They result in putting us in the position to continue in our sin.

Friends, after choosing to appreciate all Christ has done, we need to hate everything that results in destruction and corruption. Without a genuine hate for it, we will not change.

### *#3. You must repent for your willing participation in that sin*

**Colossians 3:5** Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

**Colossians 3:8** But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.

**Colossians 3:9** Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,

I suggested to you that to understand vv. 5-11 we need to pay particular attention to the commands or imperatives (Put to death, Put on, do not lie). Inherent in these commands is the belief that these things are wrong and hating all of the consequences they produce in my life.

But putting to death is more than hating isn't it? It is also repenting. I don't have time in this sermon to unpack the concept of biblical repentance but here are 3 common characteristics of a repentant person.

But I cannot just hate what sin does to my relationships. I cannot just appreciate Christ.

- I know, both by experience and ministry, that one moment we can be praising the Lord and the next moment indulging in our sin. We must repent.

#### **A. By taking responsibility for sin**

When I am in trouble I want to find as many ways as possible to minimize the damage. If I am 80% wrong then I want to find a way to make the 20% as important as possible.

Repentant people do not do this. They take responsibility for their sin and acknowledge their wrongs without trying to blame someone or something.

#### **B. By recognizing the Lord's warnings**

When we sin the Lord provides various warnings. Sometimes they come from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it comes from our Bible reading. Sometimes it comes from sermons.

Those who are repentant acknowledge that God is seeking to get their attention. Rather than listening to the various warnings they told God he needed to get a bigger stick.

#### **C. By accepting consequences**

Sometimes it is very difficult to accept consequences for our sin. Yet, the repentant person must be willing to bear whatever the Lord allows. Those who refuse to let the consequences come demonstrate that rather than repentance they want to control the situation.

Let's come back to those two sins you wrote down earlier.

- Friends, you have to hate them or they will be just like the cooler and just like the ice cream – things that we do not plan to change. The issues of our sins are much more important than a little cooler or bowl of ice cream.
- Not only to you have to hate them, you have to repent for them.

I want to encourage you to decide that today is a day you are ready to put these to death.

If I am loving Christ and all that he has done for me and thus valuing my new man condition and if I am willing to hate my sin and repent for it, then I am in the perfect position to take the next step.

*#4. You must renew your mind with the peace of Christ and the Word of Christ.*

**Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching**

**and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

A key aspect of the change process has to do with the mind. We will only put off what we believe needs to be put off. There isn't a put off or a put on without some change taking place at the level of the mind and heart.

There is not a change at the level of the mind or heart with a willingness to

### **A. Let the peace of Christ rule**

Jesus came to make and bring peace. But when the peace of Christ is not ruling in our hearts then we will find ways to have conflict.

- When the peace of Christ is ruling in our hearts then our horizontal relationships can also be characterized by that same peace.

When the peace of Christ is ruling in our hearts then we don't have to have our agenda. We don't have to our way and that is the pathway to peace in our relationships.

### **B. Be filled with the Word**

One of the reasons that we are not convicted is that we do not have the Word dwelling in our hearts. One of the reasons that we do not see a reason for change is the Word is not dwelling in our hearts.

This is where ABFs and FCI classes come from.

- [Talk about the value of exposure to that much truth]
- Now we have a very nice balance ... assuming you take advantage of the opportunities

Our final step is ...

***#5. You must do the actions that glorify Christ.***

**Colossians 3:12-14** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;<sup>13</sup> bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. **14** Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

**Colossians 3:17** Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

The final part of the change process is replacement.

- I not only stop doing something; I also start doing something else. Again the Lord was kind enough to explain the content of his will to us. Each one of these elements is something that God says he wants to be true for every one of his children.



### A. A heart of compassion and kindness

Both of these actions are concerned with how we relate to people.

- We have all seen the special moments where a special needs person on a high school football team runs for a touchdown and all the players and fans celebrate his success.
- We have also seen groups like the make a wish foundation who offers special trips to children and their families with a terminal illness. Many of them bring us to tears.

But compassion and kindness is not just for the large special moments, they are supposed to be part of our character. Part of how we relate to people in our daily routine. Compassion and kindness should impact how we wake up, how we greet our children, the attitude we have the moment we walk into work.

If people don't like to hang out with you, maybe it is because you are not a person who has compassion and kindness as a part of your character.

### B. Humility

In Greek culture humility was always bad. It was a symbol of weakness.

- It took the person of Jesus to convert the entire group of "humility" words in the Greek language and make them a positive virtue.
- But much like our ancient counterparts, humility is not celebrated as a whole in our society. It is part of the Christian worldview.

It means that I can produce like crazy and not ask for all the credit. It means I can work hard and not ask people to worship me along the way.

- It means I don't have to be the hero of my family, of my marriage, of my co-workers, or my church because I understand that there is only one hero and that is Jesus.

### C. Bearing with another

This is another description for patience. Patience is not a one-time occasion. It is supposed to be part of our character because we recognize that God is patient with us. We could ask ourselves if God responded to me the way I am responding to others, what would be true?

Some of us have very little patience for others of us. This is an area God may want you to think about today.

I have covered a lot of ground today. This passage is one of the richest passages in the Bible on the process of biblical change. I think it is helpful to put this process on a couple of charts to make it something easy to use.

Foundation: I love and appreciate Jesus for who he is and what he has done. He brings about conviction regarding an area of sin. (this was point 1)

Put to death	Renew my mind	Put On
Sinful anger	I believe that sinful anger is wrong and is a disgrace to the cross of Christ. I hate what it is doing in my life and relationships.	Righteous anger

	I believe that my anger should be consistent with the Lord's.	
Sinful expressions of anger	I believe that my expressions of anger are sinful. They are not consistent with the Lord's treatment of me nor are they appropriate.  I believe that my anger should be expressed in ways consistent with biblical truth.	Righteous expressions of anger
Impatience	I believe that my impatience is sinful and if God treated me the way I am treating _____, then I would be in serious trouble.  It is my responsibility, by the power of Christ, to bear with _____ in love.	bearing with one another

You can even take this exact same chart and use it with one instance in your life (even if it only took 10 minutes).

Event: Sinful expressions of anger

<b>Put to death</b>	<b>Renew my mind</b>	<b>Put On</b>
I yelled	I believe that sinful anger is wrong and is a disgrace to the cross of Christ. I believe that my anger should be consistent with the Lord's.	Righteous anger
I threw a ball across the room in frustration	I believe that my expressions of anger are sinful. They are not consistent with the Lord's treatment of me nor are they appropriate. I believe that my anger should be expressed in ways consistent with biblical truth.	Righteous expressions of anger
I left the house and slammed the door on the way out.	I believe that my impatience is sinful and if God treated me the way I am treating _____, then I would be in serious trouble. It is my responsibility, by the power of Christ, to bear with one another (warts and all).	bearing with one another

I want to encourage you this week to take this chart and use it as a template for the 2 areas that you believe God wants you to change.