

# NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S SERMON July 2<sup>nd</sup> am Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ" Pt 8 "Taking off the old self" Text: Colossians 3 verses 1-11 Scripture references from the ESV

**Colossians 3:1-11** <sup>1f</sup> then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your<sup>[a]</sup> life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:<sup>[b]</sup> sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self<sup>[d]</sup> with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,<sup>[e]</sup> free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Over the course of the last few weeks, we have seen that, in Christ, we have true freedom. This raises a question however. If we have freedom and fulness in Christ, how come there seem to be so many rules to follow? The passage above has a long list of things we are to do or not to do. Is Paul contradicting himself, then?

- Some will say that, if Christ died and took our punishment, then surely, we are free to do what we want. Is that not what true freedom means?
- Others will argue (see **Col Ch2**) that a greater spiritual reality can only be reached by following an explicit set of instructions, and we have not yet received the fulness of Christ.

The choice seems to be either lawlessness (doing what we want) or a form of legalism (thinking our good works earn God's blessing). We can all fall into this trap, since it is our natural human condition to either be lawless or legalistic. However, Paul shows us that neither of these two options should define who we are as Christians.

**What does it mean to truly live out our freedom in Christ?**

**It is to live a life of Christ-centred worship.**

- **What is worship?** It is something that everyone does – it is not just singing hymns and songs! Worship is connected to the thing that we centre our lives around – whatever shapes our hearts and minds. The word ‘worship’ means to ‘bow down before’. All humans submit their lives to something or someone.

**The problem lies in what or who we worship.**

1. **Paul calls Christ’s people to define their lives by who they are in him (vv1-4 above).** Once you have put your faith in Christ, and have all the freedom and fulness that brings, then set your worship on him. Define your life around the object of your new life, instead of around the things on earth that have been tying you down.
- Though we have freedom in Christ, we so often live out our old life which was bound by sin.

Imagine you are in prison on a life sentence. The prison is a terrible place, with bad food and no natural light. You know that you will die there. Then, one day, something miraculous happens. The price has been paid for your freedom and the prison door is open. A life of freedom awaits you and you would certainly get out as fast as you can! Paul is telling us that even though we have been set free from the prison, we remain in it. We could walk out and enjoy our freedom, and we have all the fulness of Christ in us to enable us to do that. Yet we are still letting our lives be defined by the prison cell of our old life rather than by the freedom that has been won for us.

- Paul calls us to come out of the prison and enjoy the life that is available for us.

**We do that by worshipping Christ, by defining our life by him and finding our delight in him.**

**We need to constantly seek out and live out who we are in Christ.**

Paul encourages us to not just set our minds on Christ, but also our hearts, giving our all to him. The Lord Jesus Christ himself said the most important commandment is:

**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.**

We are called by Christ to be Christ centred worshippers, and that takes effort. Paul tells us to seek – that is not a one-off action. We need to constantly seek Christ. If we stop,

then we will find ourselves back in the prison where we were before – worshipping earthly things.

- We can do this because, not only do we have freedom, but we have the fulness of Christ.

We have been raised with Christ. Our old life died with him on the cross and we are wholly and truly bound to him, hidden with him 'in God'. We are secure. We have God's fulness flowing through our veins to strengthen us to be the true worshippers we are designed to be. If you think that makes you sound like a superhero, you are not far wrong!

2. **We need to put our old life to death (v5-11).** We need to put self to death. We are indulging in self-worship when we live life our own way, living in sin and remaining in that prison of our old life.

### **Sin is a prison cell commonly advertised as a playground.**

We may well think that living for ourselves is the true freedom, but it is not. Self-worship, which is the root of sin, controls us and dominates us. It has only one possible ending –

- eternal separation from the only being worthy of our worship, the only one who provides freedom from sin, evil and pain.

When we look at our culture of self-worship, we can see the emptiness of it, often commented on by those who have found a brief moment of fame and fortune within it. It is a prison.

- **v5-11** is not actually a list of rules, but rather it is instructions for living out the freedom we have in Christ.

We do this first by putting to death all forms of self-worship, but Paul singles out two here.

- a) **We need to put off anything that replaces God (v5).** Sinful sensuality and covetousness must be eradicated from our lives because they replace God. They are the idols of the human heart, and **because of these the wrath of God is coming (v6).**

**Sinful sensuality:**

- **Sexual immorality** – meaning every physical relationship that happens outside the confines of one man and one woman in the context of marriage. God designed

marriage so that we would not be led by our sexual desire but by our identity in him. Our sexual desires should not control us.

- **Impurity** – not just physical desire but also moral uncleanness, meaning lurid imagination, speech and deeds of a sensual heart or filthy mind. We are called to kill off what imprisons us by popping up in our mind.
- **Passion** – sexual desire that controls us
- **Evil desire** – the three listed above all lead to this. We must cut off this self-serving, self-worshipping rapacious lust, where sex is all about me and what I can get from it. It is not what sex is designed to be.

### **Physical desire replaces God.**

**We should live in the freedom of being defined by God and not by our bodies.**

**Covetousness** – this is not just the desire to have more than you already have, but also the desire to have more than you ought to have, and particularly what belongs to someone else. Rather than physical self-worship, this is material self-worship. In our culture, this is often rewarded. Material prosperity, even in churches, often leads to people being put into leadership or honoured in some other way. When we put our trust in material things – our houses, holidays, savings and even family - we are worshipping them and they replace God.

We worship these things because it builds up our own self-worship. Covetousness is the most culturally respectable form of self-worship. You may not have a problem with sexual sin, but it is unlikely that you do not struggle with covetousness. We get trapped in the prison of sinful covetousness, where we are never happy and are always looking for the next home improvement, the next gadget or a new car or perhaps the next way to make more money or have more influence.

We are called to put these things to death, but what does that mean? It means being cutthroat with what tempts you to enter in to those forms of self-worship. How you do this will vary.

- **Sexual sin** – You might put in some accountability and put some safe settings on your computer

- Covetousness – we need to open ourselves up to talking honestly about how we deal with the temptation to materialism, and how we manage our money and power.

**b) We need to put off anything that dishonours God (vv8-9).** Evil attitudes and evil speech are the outworking of self-worship. Anger, wrath and malice denote an attitude of burning anger that boils over and results in our being horrible to other people. Then evil speech emerges:

- **Slander** – hurtful speech or gossip, speaking behind someone’s back and undermining them to others.
- **Obscene talk** – this is not really about swearing. It is about abusive speech.
- **Lying** – the great sin

All of these happen in our church. We may not swear but we can be abusive in our speech without using swear words. All of these attitudes come from self-worship, and the sense that we are not in control.

- We get angry because we feel we have been wronged
- We get angry because something has not happened in the way we thought it ought to.

When we feel we don’t have control, we get defensive and that makes us angry. Then we can get trapped in this prison of rage, malice and deceit. We see it so often in the world around us, but more importantly we can see it in ourselves and more often than we care to admit.

Paul tells us to put off our old self, which was all about self-worship and control.

**We put off our old self by coming to Jesus and declaring that we give him control**

**We declare that it is Christ’s glory that matters not ours**

This is the key to putting self-worship to death. See who you are in Christ (v1), and be filled with joy at that reminder. When we seek the things that are above, we start putting on our new self. As we seek Christ, worship Christ, grow in our knowledge of him and define our lives by him, we see who we are in him (vv10b-11). Then we are motivated and empowered to put to death self-worship more and more.

As a result, constant renewal is taking place in our lives as we steadily increase our knowledge of what God is like. This knowledge leads us to progressively being conformed to the Creator's image, thus building a life like his. As we grasp more and more at the fulness of God that has been given to us, and as we worship him more and more,

**We begin to have a truly joyous, fully free life in Christ.**

**We can live out our freedom from the prison of self-worship.**

**It is living for Christ that is the playground, not living in sin**