

# Goal #2 Don't Be Who You Are Apart From Christ (Part 1)

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- [ 0 : 00 ]     How are you coming along with your New Year's resolutions? Can you identify with this guy on the screen? Before and after two weeks. In two weeks, Johnny has lost two weeks. Now, you may like this next lady's resolutions. New Year's resolutions. Eat more chocolate, eat more pizza, eat more cheesecake. That sounds like a winner, doesn't it? But now, if we're wise, we're going to listen to this next guy. I don't make New Year's resolutions. If I have something I want to change, I don't wait until New Year's to change it. Wise, isn't it? Many people begin every New Year by making resolutions or setting goals to achieve specific changes in their life. Last week, I pointed out that God has goals for us. But God's goals are never just for a new year. God's goals are for this hour, this day, this year, and beyond.
- [ 1 : 13 ]     That's the title of this new sermon series we began last Sunday. God's goals for you this hour, this day, this year. And what we're going to do is look at this as it unfolds in Colossians 3, verses 1-17. God is always at work in our lives for the ultimate purpose of this goal. Making us like Jesus. Look at it. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image or likeness of His Son. Everything that happens in our lives, good and bad. Things you choose, things you do not choose. God is sovereign. He's either brought it into your life or allowed it to come into your life. And it's always for a purpose. He actually, for many purposes, teaches us a lot of different lessons. But His ultimate goal in your life and mine as His children is to develop our character.
- [ 2 : 20 ]     Make us more and more like Jesus. Well, Colossians 3 is a good passage of Scripture to give us some insight as to how God accomplishes this. And we're going to look at it in terms of three goals that God has for us. We looked at the first one last week. Goal number one, be mindful of who you are in Christ. Know who you are in Christ. I'm going to remind you a little bit of that in a moment. Today we're going to look at God's second goal from verses 5-11. Don't be who you are apart from Christ. It was my plan. It was my goal to do this in three weeks, but there's no way. So this is part one of goal two this morning. I want you to look with me if you would. Colossians 3, beginning in verse 5. And let's read it together. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you. And He doesn't leave us in the dark of what He's talking about.
- [ 3 : 21 ]     And He says, what's 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, and 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.

We're going to stop there. I want us to begin with a reminder, a very important reminder from last week. Look at it. God calls us to understand who we are in Christ.

God wants us, look at it. Colossians chapter 1. If then you have been raised with Christ. He's talking about Christians. And that word if could be translated since.

[ 4 : 28 ] He's talking to people who are believers. And one of the ways he describes how we are united to Christ is we've been raised with Him. In fact, the first four verses, he describes how we are united to Christ in three different ways.

Look at it. You have been raised with Christ. You have died. And your life is hidden with Christ in God. Also in chapter 2, verse 20, with Christ you died. Then in verse 4, Christ who is your life.

Here's what he's talking about. He's describing how you and me as Christians are united to Jesus Christ by faith in His death and resurrection.

We have died with Christ. That means the penalty for our sin has been paid. When He died on the cross, He experienced God's wrath against our sin.

When He died on the cross, He was our substitute. He took the punishment that our sin deserves. He paid in full the penalty for our sin.

[ 5 : 39 ] And so, we are forgiven by virtue of our being one with Christ because His death to sin counts as our death to sin. I want you to understand, if you are trusting Jesus as your Lord and Savior, truly, God does not hold your sins against you.

They've been paid for with the blood of Christ. This also means that the power of sin has been broken in our lives by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit sometimes is called the Spirit of God in Scripture. Sometimes He is called the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of the Lord lives in us. Therefore, we can resist any temptation.

He also gives us the desire and the ability to obey God. So, before we became Christians, we were enslaved to sin, the Scripture says.

But now that we have been united to Christ, the power of sin has been broken. Here's the thing. When you choose to sin and I choose to sin, it's our choice.

[ 6 : 56 ] If we're Christians, the Spirit of God would have enabled us to say no, to run away. God always provides a way of escape if we'll just look for it and take it.

We've died with Christ. We've also been raised with Christ. That means we have eternal life. It's more than living forever, but living forever is a great thing, isn't it?

If you're a Christian, don't fear death. If you're a Christian, however it happens, when you close your eyes in this world, you will open them again in the presence of the Lord.

And every Christian has ever died before that. That should be comforting to us. But eternal life is a quality of life. We are privileged children of God right now if you're in Christ.

Paul is telling us, Colossians 1, 1 through 4, 3, 1 through 4, this is how God sees us. And it is how we must look at ourselves because this is who we are now, you and me.

[ 8 : 08 ] Because we are united to Christ, one with Him in faith. Now, what Paul says next, what we just read, is based on the fact that we're already Christians.

We don't become Christians by getting rid of sin in our life and adding some good things. We become Christians by the grace of God through faith in Jesus.

And with Christ living in us, us being united to Him, we can live the life that we are reading about now in verses 5 through 11.

Let's look at now. The way to avoid being who you are apart from Christ. The way to avoid being who you are in and of yourself.

We need to understand that if God looks at us just alone, or if you're not a Christian, the way God looks at you, He sees a weak, sinful person.

[ 9 : 16 ] I want you to look at how Paul described himself really as a Christian, but in his struggle with his sinful nature. Look at it.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. Some translations say, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. You get that? Been there?

Feel that way? Well, Paul goes on to point out that only the Lord Jesus can deliver us from the power of our sinful nature.

Look at what he says a few verses later in Romans 7 again, verses 24 and 25. Wretched man that I am because of this struggle. Who will deliver me from this body of death?

[ 10 : 15 ] Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It's through Him that we're able to overcome and be victorious in obeying God, doing what He wants us to do.

Let's look now at how Paul told them as Christians united to the Lord to deal with their former sinful habits, or just to deal with sinful temptations.

Look at it. Verse 5, you must kill sin. He says, put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you. Paul makes it real clear.

We've got to deal with old sinful habits or current temptations to sin as strongly as possible.

We don't play around with it. We don't flirt with it. We put it to death. We kill it.

[ 11 : 17 ] Obliterate it. As Christians united to Christ, we can and we must put to death every form of sin that we're tempted to commit.

In verse 5, the emphasis is on putting to death every form of sexual sin. Let's look at this. Look at these words.

Sexual immorality. Comes from the Greek word pornea, where we get the word pornography today. It's the most general word to describe a sexual relationship outside of marriage.

It can refer to any type of sexually impure action. Adultery. Premarital sex. Homosexuality.

Any kind of sexually immoral behavior is what he's talking about. Next word, impurity, refers to all moral uncleanness. Impure thoughts. Describes all of our impure thoughts, desires, speech, in addition to any kind of impure action.

[ 12 : 28 ] The next word, the word is passion, but it's probably better translated lust for us today. Because you know the word passion, it's used in a mostly positive way nowadays.

Describes someone, what a person is excited about or has a strong desire to do. We've got a lot of teachers in our church who I would say that you might say, working with children is my passion.

At least when you first started. But to use the word as it's used today, what you do at your job, that could be your passion.

Some sport, music, that's your passion. That is not the way Paul is using this word. He's speaking of it in a negative way, improper passions.

He's talking about lustful, sexually impure desires. Then the word evil desire is similar to lust. In fact, all these words are connected. He's talking about sexual immorality in general.

[ 13 : 39 ] He just uses a lot of different words to describe it. But this word evil desire may refer to a stronger habitual kind of lust. And then he uses that word we don't use a lot today.

Covetousness. Some translations translate it greed. Covetousness or greed, which is idolatry. This is more than just having a desire to have more than what you've got right now.

This is talking about a strong desire to have that which you know you shouldn't have. He's talking about being discontent.

Now, specifically, it describes a sinful desire to have what belongs to another person. That's how it's used in the 10th commandment.

Notice this. Now, I want you to note, Paul describes such desires as idolatry.

[ 15 : 02 ] Worshiping a false god. He's talking about us having sinful desires that are stronger than our desire for God and His way and will.

You know, the most basic way to describe why we sin at any given moment is because at that moment we desire it more than we desire to obey God.

What's one of the things that you are tempted to do? Somebody raise your hand and tell us one of the most horrid things you're tempted to do. Okay? Let's just say it's to spread gossip.

Let's just say I hear something about Mike Sterlachini. And I don't know if it's true or not. It doesn't really matter. It makes him look bad, and I'd sort of like to make him look bad to Brian.

And so I go to Brian, but as a Christian, I know I shouldn't gossip. But sometimes the desire to enlighten Brian and make Mike look bad is what I want to do more than obey God.

[ 16 : 32 ] That applies to any of our temptations. When we sin, as Christians, it's because in that moment we desire to do that more than we desire to obey God.

And that means when we choose to sin, we are worshiping ourselves. That means in the moment we are God. I'm God. And I do what pleases me.

This word covetousness, greed, it's serious. To never be content. To always want more than you know you really need.

Or to envy what other people have and just want what they've got. Sometimes because they've got it. Since sexual immorality is listed in such a prominent and detailed way in this verse, we know that such sinful attitudes and behaviors are not new.

In fact, in the ancient world, in first century Rome there, as Paul was writing, by the way, he talks about this in numerous letters about sexual immorality. Warns us, cautions us.

[ 17 : 47 ] Because in the ancient world, sexual immorality, it wasn't immoral. I mean, it's always been immoral. But people, they just didn't think about that. Men in ancient Rome, they had a wife.

They had a, you know, somebody on the side. And everybody did. It's just what you did. And so for the Christian church to introduce this idea of sexual purity, that got people's attention because no other religion emphasized that.

Jews did, but the pagan religions were talking about. Sexual temptations have always been the strongest temptations, or among at least the strongest temptations.

And they still are. Think about it. If you just live a normal life in today's culture, you're going to be subjecting yourself to various kinds of sexual stimulation, sensuality.

Just think about it. We know this. We've talked about it for years. Sex sells everything imaginable today. If you take a newspaper, there's ads there trying to sell something that they're not really wanting you to look at the shoe.

[ 19 : 19 ] They're wanting you to look at the leg that the shoe's on. Whether it be in print media, whether it be on the Internet, whether it be on TV, sex sells just about everything, doesn't it?

And we know that sex outside of marriage has always been a staple of Hollywood. There's just no thought in Hollywood in most movies and TV shows that sex is intended for just a man and woman in a marriage relationship.

I say all this to say, to point out, this world in which we live, the way things are in these categories, all this has desensitized us to the idea that anything is sexually impure.

If you doubt it, just look around the way most people dress, talk, and live today, including Christians. And if we want to be honest, haven't our own personal standards of sexual purity dropped over the years as indicated in the way that we dress or talk or live for all three?

Even though our culture's standards and even our own have dropped, we need to understand that gods have not. God does not change.

[ 20 : 53 ] Never has, never will. What God has revealed in His Word that is right, it'll always be right until Jesus comes back, and even into eternity.

What God has said in His Word clearly is wrong. It's always been wrong. And it's based on God's nature and God's character. You know, sometimes you might think, well, who determined what's right or wrong, that, you know, adultery is wrong, that premarital sex is wrong?

Well, God did. And He's God. He gets to do that. No one else does. And so, Paul is warning us, don't flirt with this kind of stuff.

Don't play around with it. Kill it. Eliminate it. Don't hurt yourself with it. But I want to pause here. I want to be clear about this matter. Sex is not sinful.

God created us with sexual desires and drives, needs. But God also gave us guidelines and boundaries for fulfilling our desires and drives.

[ 22 : 11 ] God's intended place for us as human beings, men and women, to fulfill our sexual desires is the marriage relationship between one man and one woman.

And this is a part of God's original creation. I want you to look. In Genesis 2, verses 24 and 25, the end of creation. God's talked about how He has created the world and everything in it.

And in Genesis 2, especially man and woman, Adam and Eve, look at what He said. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

And the man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed. God created sexual desires, needs, sexual intimacy.

It's His idea. It's good. It's healthy between you and your spouse. And if you're not married, between you and your future spouse when you get married.

[ 23 : 15 ] But let's go back to what He's talking about. Paul is using strong language to describe how we must deal with all forms of sin, including sexually impure thoughts, desires, and actions.

We've got to put it to death. Here's what I want you to do. You've got to think. You know how you're tempted in these ways. You know what gets your attention.

You know what gets your mind to thinking. You know what gets the drive going. How could you stop it before it starts?

What could you do to kill those old thoughts of the way you used to live from coming back? What could you do to avoid before it even starts certain temptations to lust or to do even more?

That's what you need to do to kill it. You know what you need to do because you know how you are tempted. I don't know how you're tempted.

[ 24 : 26 ] You know how I'm tempted? I'm not going to tell you. But you know how you are. Kill it. Don't entertain it for a moment.

Kill it. Then he goes on to explain why we must do this. Number two, the reasons why you should avoid being who you are apart from Christ. Number one, you want to avoid God's wrath.

Such sinfulness, engaging in such sinfulness provokes the wrath of God. Look at it in verse six. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. The wrath of God is real.

Just as much as the love of God. In our day, people don't want to think about God being angry, God being wrathful, God punishing sin.

But just as much as God loves, as God forgives, God hates and God punishes.

[ 25 : 27 ] We're going to look at that in a lot more detail next week. But right now, there's another reason why we must kill sin and avoid being who we are apart from Christ.

We're going to really go back to the beginning. You are one with Christ right now. You are, if you're a Christian, one with Christ right now. Look at this. Such sinfulness was a part of our past life, not now.

Look at it in verse seven. In these, you too once walked when you were living in them. Look at verses nine and ten. 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.

You put off the old self. What do you look at now? The kind of things we're talking about. That's not who you are as a Christian. If you're a Christian, you have been made new.

You are one with Christ. Some people in this room, you lived a sinful life before you were saved. And you know from experience how powerful sin is.

[ 26 : 42 ] If that's you, your former life calls out to you at times in the form of tempting you to come back.

Do things that you used to do before you became a Christian. But what Paul is saying is, remember, you're not that person anymore. That person died with Christ.

You are new. The Spirit of God lives within you now. He will enable you. He'll give you the desire and ability to say no to this temptation.

He'll give you the desire and ability not to go back to that way of life. And if He will do that, you can, by God's grace, live a holy life, a pure life, a God-honoring life, all because of your union with Christ, all because He lives in you by His Spirit.

Now, many people in this room never lived a wicked life before you were saved because you were saved as a child. And you need to thank God for that. Thank God that you did not grow up and get involved in all kinds of sordid, sinful ways of life and then come to faith in Jesus.

[ 27 : 59 ] Thank God that you grew up in a Christian home, that you never were exposed to a lot of just pure garbage. You came to Christ as a young person. Be thankful.

But here's the fact. Even if you became a Christian at age 10, never got involved in that stuff, you have been bombarded with enticements to sin all of your life.

And your sinful nature tells you how pleasurable it would be to do some of the things you're tempted to do, to get involved in some of the things some of your friends are involved in.

Some of you who became a Christian at a young age, you have given in to those temptations. And so you know from experience the pleasures of sin that you have experienced as a Christian.

But I want you to listen close. If you are truly a Christian, the Spirit of God living in you will not allow you to enjoy sin for long.

[ 29 : 12 ] Now there's somebody who says there is no pleasure in sin is an idiot. Just stupid. It's pleasurable to do sinful things. If it wasn't, nobody would do it.

The Bible even talks about there's pleasures in sin for a season. But here's what I want you to understand. If you are a Christian and you disobey God, you give in to temptation, you get involved in some kind of, let's just say, sexually impure relationship, or endeavor, sooner or later, the Spirit of God is going to convict you, inflict guilt upon you.

That's God's way of disciplining you, getting your attention, and telling you, you can't live that way as my child. And if you're a Christian with the Spirit of God within you, you don't really want to live that way.

And so if you're a Christian, when you sin, sooner or later, you're going to be convicted, you're going to confess it, you're going to repent of it, you're going to seek God's forgiveness, you're going to renew your faith to the Lord, and that's not going to be the way you live.

Now, if I'm describing you right now, you're a Christian, you're involved in some kind of sinful behavior right now, and you're feeling guilty, you're feeling miserable, that is good.

[ 30 : 40 ] It may be that you're making people all around you feel miserable as well, that is not good. I want to encourage you, just be honest with God, quit playing around, it's not going to get any better, God's just going to put the screws down even more.

So confess your sin, humble yourself, repent of it, come back to God in renewed faith, love, commitment.

But here's what I want you to understand, everybody in this room, listen, if you can sin and enjoy it, you can sin with absolutely no guilt, no worries, you don't care what God thinks, you don't even think about God, I want you to know that you are not a Christian, you cannot be a Christian, there is nothing in the Bible that would say you're a Christian, if you can sin, just enjoy it, don't worry about it, no guilt, no conviction, no nothing.

That means the Spirit of God's not in you because sin grieves the Spirit of God and sin will grieve you sooner or later if you truly are a Christian.

saving faith is continuing faith. I want you to look back, hopefully you got your Bible open to Colossians, look back if you would, Colossians 1 verse 21 with me, this is not going to be on the screen because I just thought about it right before we started this service.

[ 32 : 12 ] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

Look at verse 23. If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.

If you don't continue in the faith, if you walk away, have no hope, no confidence in that gospel you heard, you're not a Christian.

And they may be on the roll, but you're not a child of God according to the truth of scripture. Now, I hope that bothers you if you're not a Christian.

I hope that bothers you if that is who you really are. You know, even if you've been baptized, your name's on the roll. Because if that bothers you, that very well may be God's wake up call to you.

[ 33 : 30 ] So humble yourself. Don't argue. Admit your sin. Admit you're not a Christian. Repent of your sin, your selfishness, the way you've been living, the attitude that you have.

Put your trust in Jesus truly, totally, wholeheartedly as your Savior and surrender your life to him as your Lord. Call upon him to save you now. Just wind it up.

If you have a relationship with Christ in which you love him, trust him, serve him, and desire to be like him, you can resist temptation and live a holy life by God's grace.

You can. That's what God will do in you and for you. That's who you are in Christ. That's how God calls every Christian to live.

So the question we need to ask ourselves before we leave is this. Am I in Christ? Am I really a Christian? And if not, you just heard what to do.

[ 34 : 39 ] But if you are, you have the power, the indwelling Spirit of God to help you resist every temptation, every sinful desire.

You can resist it today, tomorrow, the next day. Every day, be sensitive to the Spirit, listen to what he says, obey what he leads you to do.

Kill sin. Run from temptation. Do what you can to avoid it. Where you can't avoid it, just ask the Lord to help you to be strong, to say no, to walk away, to make somebody mad, to totally change the way you've been living.

We're called by the Lord to live like his children. And by God's grace, we can. He's showing us here how not to live, how we won't live if we're Christians.

Make sure that you understand and that your life lines up with what the Scripture says a Christian is and how a Christian lives.

[ 35 : 58 ] Let's pray together. Dear God, help us now to know how to respond to you. Make it clear.

Help that person who is yours, but who struggles. Help them to know, dear God, that they are secure in Jesus Christ.

Help them to know that they are your child. The penalty for their sin has been paid. The power of sin has been broken. Help them, Father, to act on the desires of your spirit to obey you, to honor you, to resist temptation, to kill sin.

sin. Father, I pray that you would call anyone who is not a true believer to faith in Jesus right now while they have the opportunity.

And in attitude of prayer, let's all listen to the Lord and respond to Him. If you'd like to pray together here at the front, I'll be happy to do that in these next few minutes.