

If you have your Bibles, grab them. Colossians 3 is where we'll be. Last week, we flew through Colossians 3 just so I could set up this, "Christians behave like this and don't behave like that," and then we could dive into the actual tension of that. What I mean by tension is that Christians actually do act like this, and sometimes rarely act like this. So there is this tension between the commands of Scripture about how believers in Christ are to behave and the reality that most of us don't actually behave that way or have some residual effects of the Fall present in our lives. So we stole a quote from D.A. Carson where he talked about grace driven effort. Now, he didn't define grace driven effort, so we spent all last week and set up this fact that we are to behave a certain way and not behave another way by defining how we combat sin with grace driven effort vs. our own willpower, which has doomed a great deal of us to a cycle of frustration where we do really well for a while only to fall back into rhythms of sinful behavior. So that was last week. We will reference that a couple of times tonight, but what I want to do tonight is get back into Colossians 3 and now walk you through this text, now that we've set up what grace driven effort is.

Before we get started though, we've got to go to Colossians 3:1. I told you that, until we finish with chapter 3, we're going to have to start every verse with just so that there is clarity on what's happening lest you begin to walk in what Christ came to destroy. So let's look at Colossians 3:1. "If then you have been raised with Christ. . ." So I can just stop there. The first two chapters of Colossians are simply this: "This is who Jesus Christ is and this is what He has done. He is God in the flesh, He has always been and He will always be. He is the Creator of all things, He is the Sustainer of all things and He alone can reconcile you to God. Nothing else can; nothing else will work. Your only hope at being made right before the God of the universe is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. He takes your lack of righteousness, your wickedness and imparts to you His righteousness and therefore presents you holy and right before God. It is your only hope." And so although Colossians 1 and 2 are directed at everyone, he then narrows the scope down starting in chapter 3 by saying, "For those of you who have been raised with Christ. . ." So literally the transition is, "For those of you who believe that to be true. . ." And now he's going to get into the moral transformation or the behavioral modification of the believer. Now here's why it's so imperative for you to get this. If you don't let it really sink into your heart that it's a new heart that creates change, you're going to run back to the Law and go, "I'm going to obey the Law with all my might, and by obeying the Law, I'm going to get a new heart." Jesus, the apostle Paul, all the writers in the Scriptures are going to say, "It's impossible." In fact, Paul is going to say in Romans 6 and 7, "The Law was given to you to show you that you can't keep it. So you running back to it to try to get a new heart by obeying it goes contrary to its very purpose, which is to show you that you can't keep it, that it's impossible to keep it."

So with that in view, let's go to verse 5, a command to murder. "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: . ." This is literally saying, "Murder what is earthly inside of you." And now he's going to begin to define some of these things that we are to destroy and murder with grace driven effort. "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." So first we have sexual immorality. Sexual immorality is honestly pretty simple. I always want to say this because we're in the Bible Belt, and so some of you grew up in very fundamental, very tight backgrounds, which has sent a lot of you rebelling against the church. I always want to say that sex is God's idea. It's not a dirty thing, it's not a bad thing and it's not a disgusting thing. It's God's idea. He creates Adam and Eve naked. We don't get clothes until Genesis 3, part of the Fall. He creates Adam and Eve naked and then says, "Be fruitful and multiply." Now how does that work? Sex is how that works. It's God's design, it's how God created it to be and then when you get into the Psalms, He will say, "Eat and drink your fill, you lovers." But the Scriptures are also going to

tell us that sex, outside of the boundaries of what it was created for, can do an unbelievable amount of damage, both to our own souls and to those around us. So God build's parameters around sex, not to inhibit our joy but to let us walk in the fullness of it. So there are a lot of different cultures that have a lot better word and a lot better understanding of sex than we do. The Hebrews would use the word dowd. That's a mingling of souls. There is an indian tribe in the Amazon whose phrase for, "I love you," literally means, "You have contaminated me. A part of you is now a part of me." This is Genesis 2, where the two become one flesh. It's the Hebrew idea of dowd. So sex is God's idea, He is for it and it is a gift given along these lines for our joy and for our pleasure. So in some ways, we have got to reclaim that, lest all our little Christian girls grow up in church hearing, "It's bad. . .it's bad. . .it's bad," and then when they get married, "It's okay!" That is a pretty fast downshift. "Gross, gross, gross, go!" That is a pretty quick shift. We have to acknowledge that God created us as sexual beings and God created us with this as a gift to mankind, both for procreation and for pleasure. So if you get outside of those bounds, there is a lot of pain and a lot of destruction. And so God says, "Here's how it works. Don't get outside of this." So where there is a desire in you, where there is actual activity in you that goes outside of those bounds, seek to put it to death.

Now the second one is linked to this one, but it can really play all over the map. The second one is purity. Not only are we to put to death sexual immorality, but we're also to put to death impurity. Now most of the time, this idea of impurity is tied to sexuality. . .except in the Bible. Basically all it means is you take something that's pure and good and you pervert it. So if you have a church background, maybe you've heard a pastor who gets his illustrations from illustration books, the ones that circulated when I was in high school is, "You wouldn't eat a brownie if there was just a little bit of poop in there, would you?" It's that idea of taking something that is pure and right and you defile it or you make it filthy. Now that can be absolutely true about sex. That's actually what we described in regards to sexuality. God created it, it's pure, it's good, it's a gift from Him to us, and when you step outside of the bounds for it, it becomes perverted or impure. Now the idea of impurity though can roll all over the map, because you can take anything in the creative order and use it outside of its bounds, therefore defile it and make it impure. I'll give you two that you probably don't think about. Food was given to us by God, for God so that worship might exist, gratitude might exist and so that we might be strengthened and sustained for the work He has called us to, whether that work be architecture or law or welding or teaching or whatever He has called you to. So food is to sustain that. Unfortunately, we've learned that certain types of food make us feel good or it makes the pain go away for a while. It manages our emotive ups and downs. So all of a sudden, we don't go to God, we don't run to the Father for security; we use food as a drug. We drink seventeen cups of coffee a day and live off of sugar. This would be taking what God gave to us to use for our longevity, our health and His glory and abusing it. This would be us taking something that is good and walking in an impure fashion with it. This is also true about money. Money is not wicked. The love of money is the root of all evil; money is not evil. It was given to us by God, for God, to teach us all sorts of things that I don't even have time to begin to unpack fully. But if increased money for you always means that you get to upgrade your lifestyle and you've never sat down with your wife, your husband or even as a single professional and said, "Where is the line? What point is enough? At what point do we go, 'This is good. Let's start funding the kingdom. Let's start funding God's work. Let's start giving to people who are less fortunate than we are. Let's start supporting people who live in very, very dark circumstances?'" It has been my experience that very few Evangelical Christians ever even have that conversation. It's always, "I got a raise. Praise God, we can upgrade." And so what we end up doing is chasing the exact same thing the world does. We just put God's name on it, and in so doing, we what is pure and good and make it dirty and begin to walk in impurity when it comes to money. Those are the only two illustrations I'll give you. You can take anything in the creative order, and if you're using it outside of God's created design, you've made it impure.

The next one is passion. Now we've got to talk a little bit about this one, because in our culture, passion is exalted. When we think about passion, we use it in a good way, like this burning fire. There are a couple of things going on right now. You've got the NBA Finals and you've got the World Cup. The World Cup is, every four years, America goes, "Okay, we'll

give it one more chance." And so we give it a chance, we queue it up and about forty-five minutes into the game, we're like, "Okay, I remember why I don't like this game. It's been like four hours here and the score is 1-0. I'm done." Now, if you watch the game tonight of the Lakers against the Celtics, almost every commercial is going to have this idea of passion, this idea of fire, this idea of will or determination, of this giant-hearted, will not be denied, will not stop until we succeed type of mentality. And so for passion to be here, doesn't work well in our culture. You almost have to go back and see what he's saying here. And here's all he's saying. I'm going to be as clear as I can to you. He's just saying, "You're weak-willed and you're driven by your stomach. Whatever you want, you go and do with no thoughts to whether or not God would approve, no thoughts about whether there will be collateral damage because of your actions. You simply want what you want and you take what you want to take with no regards to anyone else other than yourself." So passion basically means that you're weak-willed, that you give into whatever you want and do whatever you want with regard to the outcome. And so he's saying, "This has to be put to death." There has to be consideration on the commands of God, and there has to be consideration for how this would play itself out in the lives of those around you, namely spouses, children or neighbors. All of those things come into play when you're looking at your life. So do you have weak self-discipline? That would be a good question there.

Evil desires? I have found it really hard to get anyone to admit that they have evil desires, but even knowing my own heart and soul, if what we really thought and what really was in our heart was made public, there isn't anyone in this room who wouldn't be ashamed and embarrassed. There isn't anyone in this room who would be confident to go, "Go, look through everything I've ever thought and everything I've ever wanted and the motives behind those things." We would all be unbelievably embarrassed and ashamed. So he's going, "You need to put to death those evil desires."

And then he rounds out this list with covetousness that leads to idolatry. Having a covetous heart that leads to idolatry is simply this, that you are so self-absorbed that your world view, the lenses by which you see the world around you are what you don't have and what you haven't been given rather than the joy and gratitude that comes from being aware of what you have been given. That's idolatry and that's why you covet. Because you don't go, "How good is God. I mean, we ate good food today at my house. How Good is God. I've got my health. My car started. How good is God." You could go on and on and on. There are a thousand things. You're alive today, you're moving, you're thinking, you're able to comprehend what I'm saying, you've been given hearing, you've been given sight, you've been given all these things. So what ends up happening is a bulk of us go, "I want that. I don't have that. They got that. Why does God give that to them and not to me?" And then we begin to murmur and grumble, and our life is built upon what we did not get and what has not been given to us. And the lenses by which we see the world are not, "How good is God. Look at all He has given me." But rather we go, "Look at what other people have. How come I don't have it?" Which leads you to be self-absorbed, murmuring with a lack of joy and gratitude. And the Scriptures are going to say, "Put this nonsense to death. Murder it."

Now, he's going to tell you why we need to put those things to death. Look at verse 5 again. "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." I don't know of a subject that is avoided as much as the wrath of God. We do not live in a culture where it's going to be received very well. Everybody loves Easter Bunny Jesus. He lets you sit on His lap, you take a picture with Him at the mall and He hides presents in your lawn. Everybody loves Easter Bunny Jesus. Nobody likes the reality that over and over again, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, you visibly see the wrath of God against sin and towards rebellion against Him. And so what we want to do right now is give Jesus a makeover. "Let's give Him a new nose. Let's take away His sword. Let's take away those tattoos. Let's take away His anger and rage towards rebellion against His name. Let's make Him pretty so that other people might buy into His loveliness." It is an absurd exercise that will not work, because His holiness and beauty are inseparably linked to His wrath. If God is the Creator of and the Commander of beauty and goodness and the reflection of His moral character and is not bothered by us standing in opposition to that, He is at best indifferent to sin and at worst cares nothing for the pain and sorrow that

rebellion causes all over the world. So God's wrath towards disobedience is absolutely tied to His holiness and beauty. You cannot separate them out. He is not holy and beautiful and righteous if He is not wrathful towards rebellion against that holiness. You cannot separate these two ideas, as much as you want to talk with a Southern drawl and promise people wealth and health. You can't do it. If you separate these things out, you no longer have the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that wasn't even veiled. If you didn't follow me, I'm grateful you have escaped the teaching of that charlatan. You can go ahead and e-mail me on that one.

So in the end, do a study on the wrath of God. It falls out in two ways. You've got the passive wrath of God. This is by far the scariest to me. This is lined out in Romans 1, where you and I say, "God, I'm smarter than You. I know better than You. I'm going to do it this way." And God's response is, "Okay. Go ahead." We say, "I'm smart and I'm going to do life my way," despite that we're well aware that God said that way leads to destruction. Broad is the path that leads to destruction. There is a way that seems right to you that in the end gets everybody killed. So where we're aware of these things but still think we're smarter than God, God doesn't always intervene. His passive wrath is simply, "Go get 'em, big papa. With all your might, chase it." Romans 8 will later tell us that the earth and all of us have been subjected to futility in hope, so that as we pursue those things and it begins to destroy us, we'll turn and repent. That's passive wrath.

The other type of wrath is what you were taught in Sunday school. It's this fire falling out of the sky, God blowing stuff up, Nebuchadnezzar losing his mind and becoming like an animal for a period of years, it's disease, it's illness. So anytime it has happened in my lifetime where some sort of natural disaster has befallen a city, country or area, there's always some Evangelical that goes on the TV and talks about God's wrath. Now, there is always this uproar about that, but here's the thing. There is plenty of biblical evidence that support that might just be the wrath of God. Now here's why I don't think you should go on and say that. Because then what you're doing is saying that other countries aren't under wrath when it's simply not true. Most countries are simply under the passive wrath of God where He goes, "Okay, run after whatever you want, and when all is said and done, I'll judge you based on your running from me." And so active wrath to me isn't as scary as passive wrath, because active wrath gets your attention and turns your attention back to the God of the universe. With passive wrath, you might just wander about all the days of your life without ever turning, without ever repenting. So it's a good thing every now and then to get lit up by the Lord.

Now, a couple of things. Psalm 103 says that God is slow to anger and abounding in love. 1 Thessalonians 1 and Romans 5 say that as believers, we are not under wrath but we are under mercy. That simply means if you are a believer in Christ and bad or difficult things happen to you, somehow that is God's mercy towards you, not His wrath. So I was diagnosed in November with anaplastic oligodendroglioma, a malignant form of brain cancer. Now, because of what I know in the Scriptures, that's not God's wrath towards me. That's not punitive. God didn't go, "You know what? You only had your quiet time three times this week. You asked for this. You wanted it? You got it. Right frontal lobe." That's simply not how it works. So somehow, in all of this, God extends His mercy to me in allowing (not causing) some rogue cells in my right frontal lobe to try to take over. So I do not believe God is the cause, but at any point, He could have stopped it, at any point, He could have, said, "Uh uh." But He chose not to. And therefore, He has a plan for this that goes well beyond my understanding. And we might never see on this side of things what the full intent of that plan is. But what I do know is it's not God's anger towards me that lead to it befalling me. I know that because the Scriptures say that as a believer in Christ, I'm not under His wrath but under His mercy. So somehow this is God's mercy.

When you get a chance, dig around and do a little word study on "wrath." It will be great for your battle against sin, because you'll see how offensive it is to God. God responds two ways to your sinfulness and my sinfulness. Hell and the slaughter of Jesus Christ, both are severe and brutal. So if you want to talk about just how filthy your sin is before God almighty, look at the cross and look at the reality of hell. And you can weigh out how serious your rebellion against God actually is.

Let's keep going here. Verse 5 again, "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." Now I love verse 7 because He doesn't want you to forget something. "In these you too once walked, when you were living in them." One of the things that happened in my own heart and one of the things I've seen happen in others is that those of us who are rescued by Jesus Christ after a season of rebellion begin to follow Him, and pretty quickly we clean up our external behaviors. So pretty quickly we clean up maybe some drunkenness or maybe some act of violence. And what ends up happening is they're able to look back on those who still struggle and have little to no compassion for those who still struggle, because they were able to break free of that. They forget that all that they are is because of Christ, not because of them. And as soon as you forget this, you begin to walk with a swagger concerning your spirituality. You become really an oxymoron, an arrogant Christian. There can be no, should be no such thing. To the extent by which you judge others by your life, you have revealed that you simply don't understand our faith. Where you use your life as the litmus test to judge others, you simply reveal that you know very little about the holiness of God and how unclean you actually are, even to this day, outside of the blood of Jesus. And so this is how it plays itself out. Some of you feel real good about yourself because you're not your dad, and because you're a little bit better than your dad, you have made it. You love your kids better than your dad loved you, you're a better man than your dad was, you're a better mom than your mom was, you're a better wife than your mom was to your dad, you treat your kids better than your parents treated you, your kids have more opportunities than you had and so you feel good about yourself. Listen, I believe our kids have been given too many opportunities, too much to do, constantly without any real repercussions for accountability and responsibility, without actually training them in life and in godliness. But there are plenty of soccer opportunities, plenty of baseball opportunities. So when you begin to judge your life on that vs. judging your life next to the holiness of God, you can't help but become inflated, which is why there is this really weird balance, specifically in the letters of Scripture written by Paul, where he is going to command you to forget what is behind in regards to how it hinders your walking in and receiving the love of God in the gospel but not forgetting what is behind so much so that you judge others by your moral growth. But you are to continue to walk in compassion and love and grace towards other people. So don't forget it.

I'll give you a great verse. Romans 3:9-18 is just a beautiful little text when it comes to humanity. "What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Put that on a t-shirt. Put that on a coffee cup. "All are wicked. All are deceived. Everyone's throat is an open grave. Everyone is a liar." Put that on a t-shirt. Because that is the real state of humanity, all of humanity, even pretty humanity that has decorated its outsides to pretend that it's not those things. Remember that you too once were these things. And maybe you didn't actively walk in those things, but your heart was there. You lusted in your heart, you have rejoiced when bad things have happened to people you don't like, you have been frustrated when good things happen to people you don't like. You're not clean. And the more that you say that you are, the more 1 John comes into play that you're a liar and have deceived yourself with your own lies. That's another real chipper text in the Bible. So don't forget that you're guilty and that it's the blood of Christ alone and grace alone through faith alone, and even that gift of faith to believe in that grace was given to you by God so that you literally have zero to boast in.

So let's pick it up in verse 8. "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." So he moves then from, "Put to death all these things," to, "Put off or take off these things." And then he begins to unpack what most of us consider not to be major sins, not major issues. So it's a major issue if anger has you breaking a glass on your kitchen counter and stabbing

someone in your family. That would be anger as an issue. But just an angry heart, most people don't think that's an issue if it can be controlled externally. Most people don't think malice is a varsity sin if it can be managed externally. So if, in your heart, you want bad things to happen to people you don't care for, that never shows up, nobody ever confronts you on that. It's just in your heart. It's not visible to anyone. And unfortunately, most of us have been fed the lie that if your external behavior is okay, you're okay. So we've got this whole field of sins that we would consider what Jerry Bridges has called "respectable sins." They're just a part of life here. But the Scriptures are going to say, "Put these things off. Get these things away from you."

Now let me try to explain why. When the Associated Press came in and did the story on my cancer, one of the most unique things that has ever occurred to me happened. People from all over the world started mailing me cancer books. Some of those were legitimate cancer books, and some of them were weird ones. They would be like, "Sit like this, facing the East, and the good energy that comes from the East will dissolve your tumor." Honestly, some of them are easy to flip through and see that they're nonsense and put them to the side, but then some of them are legitimate. Even some of the ones I enjoy are the conspiracy theory ones that go, "The government doesn't want to cure cancer because that's a billion dollar industry." And listen, I've been around the wickedness and depravity of mankind enough to know there are probably some legitimate lines there, but here's why cancer is complex and hard to cure. Cancer responds differently in everyone. There are four main factors, regardless of the type of cancer: genetic makeup, diet, environment and stress. And those four things combine. So if you are horrible about all of those, if mom and dad gave you some poor genes and you couple that together with a stressful environment and work around chemicals and eat donuts for every meal, you have lined up a lot of factors, a lot of fertilizer in the ground that has made that ground fertile for really bad things to grow that could kill you. At any given point, all of us have rogue cancerous cells in our body. Some of us, because of those four factors, see those cells grow and become tumors that become aggressive and begin to attack our body. A great deal of us don't, because we have some of those factors that are actually in our favor, whether that's genetic, diet, environment or stress. All of that to say that these little sins that most of us don't think are big deals go into the makeup of our souls and create in our souls a climate ripe for varsity sins. So the reason we violently attack even the small ones, the reason we put to death in us sin is they create an environment conducive to the growth of sins that will harm and destroy not only our souls, but slander the name of God and wound and hurt all of those around us. We have been made by God to be cultivators.

There was a phenomenal article in the Wall Street Journal this week talking about what technology has done, namely the iPhone. It said that it has made us all impatient and angry. That's what the iPhone has done. Because if we have to wait ten seconds for anything, we feel this anger stir up in us. If we have to wait till we get home to do something, that creates in us stress or frustration. So I found it somewhat ironic that even the Wall Street Journal is going, "For all the promises of technology, it's making us really bad human beings. All that to say this. Matt Chandler standing in front of you right now, I did nothing today that has made me who I am today in front of you. All of that happened yesterday and in the years preceding today. So I am who I am today because of the last two decades, not because of anything I did today. Now the things I do today are shaping who I am going to be tomorrow. We hate this reality. Watch infomercials and call me a liar. "Take this pill. . .get on this machine for ten seconds a day. . .do this for three minutes a day. . .eat whatever you want for six-pack abs. . ." We're like, "Awesome. I'll take two. When can you get it here? I'm going to the beach next week and I want to hit this thing pretty good." We want no work involved, no discipline involved but rather, "Take this pill. . .get into this contraption," and all that you want, all that you want to be is yours now. The reality is we cultivate over an extended period of time who we become. So if you are doing nothing today in regards to godliness and if you are tolerating today things that lead to sin, if you allow it to dwell, if you allow it to flourish, if you allow it to fertilize your soul, you'll grow darker and darker and darker. No one stumbles into godliness. It's why Paul uses the language of fighting. He says, "Labor with me in prayer. . .train yourself for godliness." There is this idea that we've got to move and fight and be actively pursuing righteousness and the putting to death of those things in us that make our souls fertile for

what might just lead to taking us farther than we ever thought we would go. And one of the reasons we show testimony videos here is to constantly show you it happens everyday. Nobody starts out going, "I'm going to have an affair on my wife." Nobody does that. I don't know that it has ever happened. What they do is they lie a little bit, they covet a little bit, they are deceitful a little bit, some anger creeps into their hearts and they go, "If my spouse would just do this. . ." And basically all those little fantasies, all those little thoughts, all those little actions begin to build and lead up to you doing what you never imagined you could do, and that's because you allowed your soul to be fertile ground for those things, because you didn't attack those things early on when they were just a simple desire to be deceitful or a sinful desire to slander someone.

And then let's look at this last verse. We'll pick it up in verse 5 just so you can see the flow. "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, 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."

Now, next week all we're doing is talking about, if we've taken all this stuff on, what do we put on in its place? Since we're removing all these things with grace driven effort and the mercy of God in the cross, what do we put back on once we strip all of this stuff away? So that's the focus of next week, but since we've gone through this list of what's wicked, I want to go back over last week very quickly in regards to how we attack and go after these sins, these residual effects of the fall in our lives so that we might fight not in our own effort, but rather with the weapons given to us by God to combat these things. So it begins with a new heart. If you have not been converted to Jesus Christ, all of your best efforts will have been for naught. Without a new heart regenerated by the Spirit of God, you are climbing Mount Everest in a speedo with no rope, no pickaxe and you're never going to make it to the top. You're going to suffer a lot, you're going to get frustrated a lot, you're going to die cold and alone without ever hitting the summit. Without a new heart, it is an impossibility to be pleasing to God, because it's the sacrifice of Christ alone that makes you righteous. So we said last week that, without this, your only hope is to pit sin against sin. So if you pit manipulation and control against fear and anxiety, who cares who wins there? You lose because you're still walking in sin. If you put lust in the ring with self-control, who cares who wins? No matter who wins, sin wins, which means you lose. So we said that it requires the new heart. It requires you understanding and submitting to the cross of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit illuminating your mind to that reality.

Last week, we talked about the fact that grace driven effort understands that the heart is the issue, not just the external actions. External actions are great indicators that something has gone wrong in our heart, but they are not in and of themselves the issue. So your marriage being jacked up or your anger, whatever those issues are, they are great indicators that something has gone wrong in your heart, but ten times out of ten, they aren't the actual issue. There's something feeding that issue, and that's what we've got to get to the bottom of, which is why the desire to lie to someone should bother you because it's revealing that there's something going on in your heart that's much bigger than that little white lie. When you want bad things to happen to people you don't like, that in and of itself isn't the issue. There is an issue in your heart that has lead you to that desire, and you've got to get to the bottom of that.

We also talked about the fact that we are fighting against sin for reasons that go beyond our conscience. So Paul clearly talks about the fact that there is worldly sorrow that in the end leads to death and there is godly sorrow that leads to repentance. So there is a type of sorrow that understands that it has belittled God and grieved the Holy Spirit and made light of the cross of Christ, and then there is a type of sadness of "Oh, I got busted and there are ramifications to me getting busted. I wish I wouldn't have gotten busted." And everyone with kids knows exactly what I'm talking about. So

we understand as believers in Christ that our sin is offensive to the God of the universe, slanders His name, belittles the Son of God and His cross and grieves the Holy Spirit. King David, upon getting busted for murder and adultery, says, "Against You and You alone have I sinned." Now that's not necessarily true. He sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba. There is a whole slew of consequences that came from that action, but he understood that what is primary here is that he has offended the God of the universe, he has belittled the God of the universe and the grace shown to him. And He repents in sorrow, not because his conscience was bothering him, but rather because he understood that he had offended the God of the universe.

We talked about the fact that we can say no to sin because we understand that we are dead to it and we have been given a new nature that is contrary to sin. So we don't have to say yes. Anytime you walk into sin, you are agreeing and you're walking into it. Because if you have a new heart and you have the weapons to do battle against those sins and you're aware of those little white lies that you buy into that are really indications that your heart is really wicked, then there is no sin that can snatch you up and deceive you, especially if you combine all these things with where we're going next week, where you're walking in a type of community that is other focused, when you're walking with others who can help you, walk with you and encourage you on this journey.

And then the last thing we talked about was that there is a violence, there is a hatred towards indwelling sin in our lives. We don't want to give it quarter, we don't just want to starve it; we want to starve it to death. We don't want to keep little pet sins. The way most of us do that is by justifying it in our domain of society by saying, "To do business in this situation, to be accepted in this situation, this is simply how you have to do it." And you justify your behavior and you justify making the ground of your soul fertile for more wicked things by buying into the lie and keeping sin as your pet, as if you control it rather than it controlling you. And when it turns, attacks, devours and destroys, you'll be shocked and dismayed that such a thing could occur, despite the fact that you knew you put a lion on a leash and hoped it would work out for the best.

This is a real disjoint for me in the Bible Belt. I've never been able to get to the bottom of it. I have never met anyone who says they're a believer in Christ who doesn't say, "I want to grow, I want to be disciplined, I want to know God more deeply." Everyone I have met who confesses to be a believer would say that. So everyone wants to grow in a knowledge of God, everyone wants a deeper relationship with Christ, everyone wants increased joy in Him. But the follow up for me is always, "So tell me what that looks like for you right now. Tell me what you're doing." Nine times out of ten, the response is, "I come to church on the weekends." So we have people going, "The desire of my heart is to know God, follow God, worship God and grow in my love for God," but upon being asked what that looks like, the response is, "It doesn't." So here's my question for you this week. Why?

Now, two things are going to happen if you try to answer the question, "Why am I not more driven to know the things of God, to worship God? Why am I not more serious about my sin?" One of two things is going to occur. One, you're going to become convicted as you pray and look and the Holy Spirit is going to rise up in you and you're going to begin to say, "This is what my plan of attack looks like. This is what grace driven effort is going to look like for me. I'm going to attend the church's 'How to Study the Bible' seminars. I'm going to try to find a home group. These are the steps I'm going to try to take." Or you're going to come to the realization that you don't really want to know Him and you have been culturally shaped to say these things, but you're going to find out that in your heart and in your mind, you have no real love for God and no intent of following Him. You're simply, for some reason or another, believing and buying into church attendance being what God is going to check off for you when all is said and done here. And I'll tell you why that's good news. Because you're lost. You're not saved. And at least now you know it. Because when you believe that you're saved because you saw a scary sketch at RA camp or you believe you are saved because when you were eight-years-old, you were baptized or you believe you are saved because your mom and dad were Christians, whatever your definition of

"I am a Christian because. . ." that does not include the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that has purchased for me right standing before God, made evidence by my transformed life slowly but surely, any definition outside of that simply reveals that you're not a believer in Christ. So upon answering this question, if you come back to, "I have no such desire," thank God, because at least now you can go, "I'm lost. I don't want to be lost, but I'm lost. I don't really love Him." And you can begin to wrestle and press into God. You can become aware of your sin maybe for the first time in your life and repent and come to know Him in a way that leads you to grace driven effort that leads you into a transformed life. It's why a church where everybody is pretty is such a paradox. It doesn't make any sense. Jesus is even going to say, upon being accused of hanging out with really broken and jacked up people like tax collectors and sinners and that He's a drunkard and a glutton, "Hey, I didn't come for the healthy. I came for the sick. John the Baptist didn't do any of this, and you wouldn't follow him. And now I've come doing this, and you're not going to follow Me. What has been revealed is that, regardless of which direction God wants to lead you, you have no intention of going, which is what John the Baptist revealed and what I'm revealing to you in My lifestyle." At least in that moment, you can know maybe for the first time in decades that you're not a believer but instead are a pretender who is going join that absolutely mortified group of people in Matthew 7 where Jesus, "Depart from Me. I don't know you." And you can go, "Well, I went to church on Sunday. And we put a fish on the back of our car," and you can begin to list off your little things that you did, Jesus is very quickly going to go, "Yeah, but I don't know you. That was you pitting you against you, and it didn't have anything do do with Me. You bought into what I came to destroy, and now you're trying to lay that down as though that gets you entry into the kingdom." And so answer the question, "Why? Why is there no drive? Why is there no desire?" It's a question that might just save your soul.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. I thank You for an opportunity to now enter into a time of worshiping You through song. Your people have historically been a singing people and a people who love You. And so God, seal these things upon our hearts. Let us not be quick to rush out of here, but may we consider deeply our own hearts, our own mind, where we are with You, where we stand with You. And please, Father, help us sift through why there is so little desire in us to know and follow You completely. Help us. Save us from Bible Belt religion that in the end bolsters our indifference towards you. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."