



Colossians 3:7–10

7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Reflection

Yesterday, sexual sin and greed. Today, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lies. A whole laundry list of iniquity. Not every vice, by any stretch of the imagination, but Paul's point is clear. And his point is how he begins today's passage, starting at Colossians 3:7 through to verse 10,

7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is

being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now ... You know, one of the most powerful evidences for me that God exists is the way that I've changed, even over the last 10 years. When I remember who I was, the thoughts of my heart, my lifestyle and motivations, the way I spent my time and my money, all of it; so vastly different to who I am today. Same name, same face, but a different me (to borrow some Jessica Mauboy lyrics) – and I can't explain any of it except as the direction intervention of God.

It's change like this that is the only real evidence of genuine faith. Now of course the transformation in the life of a Christian is

not linear, it's gradual, with all sorts of ups and downs. We can, and often do, backslide. But inevitably, inexorably, the hard work of the Holy Spirit, working with us (and often despite us), brings about change in the life of a Christian. He plants a conviction in our hearts when we read texts like this one, he enables us and gives us the desire for holiness, he raises our sights to the incomparable beauty of Jesus Christ until increasingly our greatest desire is to become like him. And so we change. We,

used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now...

we want something greater, something higher for our lives. We recognise sin for what it is. And with God's eyes and God's heart we're repelled by it. The self-fo-

cussed, self-centred, selfishness of it all. God enables us to see beyond ourselves and we see the hurt that sin causes. We see sin's inherent wickedness, its ugliness, its life draining, enslaving, cancerous nature and we're deeply repelled by it. And so by the power of the Holy Spirit all sorts of revulsion flashes through our minds and hearts at a list like this one.

anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 [lying] to each other

Anger. Raising your temper. Losing control. Lashing out. Verbally and physically abusing those closest to you. Hurting the ones you love. Evil.

Rage. Seeing red. Momentary insanity,

swerving your car on the road in rage, your actions so dramatically out of proportion with the incident. Lashing out like an animal, momentarily losing control to some carnal darkness deep within in. Evil.

Malice. A wicked calculating heart bent on deliberately injuring others. A disposition to delight in their pain. A deceitful and self-deluded heart forever naming it something else but always on the lookout for the next opportunity to wound. Evil.

Slander. Cutting your colleagues, friends and family down in the opinions of others. Undermining them. And in doing so exposing your own heart; a coward's heart so free and easily saying to others what you'd never dare say to a person's face, all done in secret, with no opportunity for

them to defend themselves. Evil.

Filthy language. The impulsive product of a weak and lazy mind. Filth. Refuse. Uncleanliness. 'Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks', says Jesus. Evil.

Lying. Direct from the father of lies, the devil, who when he lies speaks his own native language. Sin began with his lie when he deceived Adam and Eve. Sin continues with your lies. The opposite of truth, the enemy of truth, darkness in the place of light. Evil.

7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language

from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Think

In the worst sense of the expression there's something in this text for everyone. I've heard temptation expressed as Satan's hook. Which of these does Satan bait your hook with? In which of these areas are you weak? Where is the chink in your armour, the hole in your defences, the sin that you tend to indulge, the little flame that you keep burning instead of snuffing it out, that one day may burn the whole house down? Is it your anger?

Jonathan Edwards, America's greatest theologian, had a daughter with an un-governable temper. As is often the case, the problem was not known to the outside world. A young man fell in love with her and sought her hand in marriage.

'You can't have her', was the abrupt answer of Jonathan Edwards.

'But I love her', the young man replied.

'You can't have her', said Edwards.

'But she loves me', replied the young man.

Again Edwards said, 'You can't have her'.

'Why?' asked the young man.

'Because she is not worthy of you.'

'But', he asked, 'she is a Christian, is she not?'

‘Yes, she is a Christian, but the grace of God can live with some people with whom no one else could ever live.’

So it is with the believer filled with anger, rage and malice – poison to marriages, families and community life; as are the other vices Paul lists: slander, filthy language and lying.

I’m going to read our passage one final time and as I do listen to the Holy Spirit. Which sin touches your conscience? Where does your guilt lie? Perhaps the Holy Spirit will choose to bring before your mind and heart a conversation you’ve had recently in which you spoke a little too freely, undermining someone in the opinion of another. Perhaps the Holy Spirit will choose to impress upon your heart a propensity to

gossip; or harsh words regularly spoken in anger towards your children, almost always disproportionate to the incident at hand. Perhaps you've been dividing your church community by being overly critical of the elders, or Parish Council, or your lead pastor, or sitting silent in the presence of others who do so? Allow the Holy Spirit to convict and refine you with these words.

7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is

being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Pray

Confess your sins this morning; and turn away from them. Receive forgiveness in the name of Jesus. It may be that you also need to apologise to someone and ask for their forgiveness. Consider your heart in these matters very closely and carefully, praying for God's guidance. And pray for the Holy Spirit's help in embracing your new self and speeding on your renewal in the image of Jesus.