

**RADICAL AND RUTHLESS**  
**(Colossians 3:1-17)**

Tomorrow, school starts for 2010. Give yourselves three weeks. By then, we will hear most parents singing the same chorus again. Parents call it '*chorus*'. Children call it '*nagging*'. "*Study! Go and study! Don't keep playing! Have you done your homework?*"

If '*playing computer games*' is a school subject, then you will not need to send him for tuition class and you will not need to nag at him. He will automatically complete all his homework. He will even go and buy 10-years series on his own to do them! You will not find a more motivated student than that son of yours!!

What's the reason for his '*auto*' mode, for his high motivation? Simple -- because he enjoys it! But the whole scenario changes when the subject is not '*playing computer games*' but '*Chinese as Second Language*'!!

Enjoyment empowers effort. That was the sermon two weeks ago. That was the message of **Colossians 3:1-4**.

We know that uncleanness and evil desire -- mentioned in **verse 5**, they are bad. We know that indulging in these sins will only mean **verse 6** -- we incur the wrath of God, we will face the punishment of God. Why then do we continue to lust and indulge? Why don't we put them to death as Paul commands us?

We will continue our uncleanness and evil desire, never mind how many sermons we have heard that condemns these sins because there is enjoyment involved! Enjoyment known as '*the passing pleasures of sin*'!

To put them to death as Paul commands us, we need a ***surpassing*** pleasure to expel this ***passing*** pleasure. The surpassing pleasure is a pleasure in a Person -- Jesus Christ! It is only as we enjoy Christ, that we increasingly enjoy Him, that we shall be highly motivated to all that we are called to do, from **Colossians 3:5** onwards.

It is now past midnight. It is the time for bed. But you are not in bed, but out in the dark and cold street. You are given a huge burden to carry on your back. You are

told, no you are ordered to walk four blocks, turn right, go down three blocks, turn left, then head straight.

Staggering under the weight, you stumble on, bewildered and angry. The weight of the burden is crushing. Your back is breaking. You are dog-tired. You should be in bed by this time.

*“Why am I here,”* you murmured angrily, *“why am I doing this?”* The whole thing is so meaningless, so haphazard. It takes up all your energy and it is shortening your lifespan by 10 years! Finally you shouted at the top of your voice, *“What is this? What is happening?”*

You are now told the truth. That huge burden is your little boy. He is injured and he is unconscious. The route you’ve taken is the shortest path to the hospital. What now? You straighten up immediately. Your back no longer aches and your feet find new strength, all of a sudden! Your anger has disappeared, your attitude has changed, your pace has quickened. Why the change?

It is not just because you can now see meaning in what you are doing. More than that! It is because you have a relationship with that huge burden on your back. He is your little boy!! Your relationship with him gives you meaning and motivation to do what you are doing, and to do it with all your might! You are prepared to soak your T-shirt with perspirations. You are ready to stick Salon-pas on your back for the next few days. Why? Because you love your little boy!!

In the same way, you will be motivated to do what **verse 5** says, energised to obey **verses 8-9**, automatically give yourselves to carry out **verses 12-17** and beyond, if and only if **verses 1-4** is true of you.

**Verses 1-4** speak of your relationship with Jesus Christ – *raised with Him, hidden in Him, He is your life, shall appear with Him in glory*. And not just relationship, but a relationship marked by the word *‘enjoyment’*.

Enjoyment empowers effort. Enjoyment of Christ empowers effort to please Christ. Or, as I said 14 days ago, our power for purity lies in our pleasure in a Person. His name is Jesus.

There is a song I've learnt to sing when I was in my Nursery Sunday School class.

*In the house  
And out of door  
Washing shoes and scrubbing floor  
Ironing, washing, brewing tea  
Sometimes making Maggie Mee  
I do it all for Jesus (3x)  
He's done so much for me.*

I do it all for Jesus! He's the reason!

Why put off anger and wrath and malice? **Verse 11** --- for Christ is all and in all!

Why forbear and forgive? **Verse 13** – even as Christ forgave you!

Why let peace rule, why sing to one another? **Verse 17** – do it all in the name of Jesus!

Why submit to your husband, wife? **Verse 18** – as is fitting in the Lord!

Why obey your parents, children? **Verse 20** – it is well pleasing to the Lord!

Why do your work heartily, servants? **Verse 24** – you serve the Lord Christ!

The children sing in their song – *I do it all for Jesus!* They have something to teach us, don't they? Paul says the same – you do it, not only because it is good, it is right, it is beneficial. You do it because of Jesus. You do it all for Jesus!!

**Enjoyment empowers effort. Enjoyment of Christ empowers effort to please Christ.**

Let us now focus on the word 'effort'. It is easy to entertain a misconception. The word 'enjoyment' may lead some of us to think that what we do is sit by the seaside and sip our tea. What comes to mind is R & R – rest and recreation. This misconception will die if we read our Bibles carefully.

***Enjoyment empowers effort.*** The effort we have in view is indeed R & R – not rest and recreation, but **radical and ruthless!**

Let us start with **verse 5**. *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

*Fornication* is sexual relations outside marriage. *Uncleanness* is moral impurity of all kinds, especially in the mind and thoughts. *Passion* is lust that uses others for self-gratification. *Evil desire* is craving for evil things. *Covetousness* is a greedy heart, a heart that cries "One more!" And after it gets it, it cries, "Just one more!" It is never satisfied.

When you meet them in your life, what do you do?

The world says, "Try it! Tease it! Toy with it!"

The Bible says, "Slay it! Put it to death! Execute it! Don't let it live another second! Take whatever steps necessary to eliminate it. Tolerate no compromise. Take no prisoners. Never mind how small or seemingly insignificant it may appear, deal with it radically and ruthlessly!"

Is this what you do? Is this what you are now doing?

Tragically, many of us are not **ruthless**. We are *reckless* instead. According to the Oxford Dictionary, to be *reckless* is to act without thought or care for the consequence of the action. And that's how we act towards these mortal enemies of ours! How foolish can we get!!

Calling these enemies '*fleshly lusts*', the apostle Peter in **1 Peter 2:11** says that they war against our soul. It's war! We often forget that we are in a war!! These sins are out to kill us. Either we slay them or they slay us!! There is no ceasefire in this war. There is no de-militarized zones where we can take refuge in. These fleshly lusts do not take a sabbatical; they never apply for leave.

To let down our guard for even one moment is to be *reckless*! Instead, we should be **ruthless**! Hunt them down and put them to death, every one of them!!

Practically, this is what it means:

*If it is a place, don't go there ever.*

*If it's an image, turn away.*

*If it's a song, don't listen.*

*If it's a book, don't read it.*

*If it's a person, part company.*

*If it's done in the dark, and it is often so, drag it out into the light.*

*Sin thrives in the dark and sin dies in the light. Tell another Christian your sin and ask him to hold you accountable.*

This is the effort we are talking about – **radical and ruthless**.

Come now to **verses 8-9**. *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.*

*Anger* is slow, gradual rising of the emotion that increases to white heat. *Wrath* is sudden and passionate outburst. *Malice* is evil attitude of the mind, incline to injure others, desire to do them harm. *Blasphemy* is speaking ill of God and others, using the tongue as a whip. *Filthy language* is foul, obscene words directed at people, especially those who offend or oppose you. *Lying* is deception and deliberate untruth.

What do we do when we meet them in our life?

“Strip them off!” says the apostle. The word here does not mean take off that shirt gently, fold it properly and then keep it in your drawer safely. Rather, it means tear it away, strip it off and dump it! If for any reasons it stuck and glued itself to your body, use all your might to remove it from you!

Will it hurt? I’m sure. Will you bleed? Probably. So why do it? Why introduce pain into your life? Because of the surpassing pleasure of Christ! In fact, this surpassing pleasure will make that pain feels like just an ant bite.

In **verse 5**, we are called to slay. Now in **verse 8&9**, we are called to strip. This is the kind of effort we are talking about. A call to be **radical and ruthless**; there’s no place for sentiment when it comes to sin.

Are you busy stripping -- stripping anger and wrath and malice and blasphemy and filthy language and lying from your life? Are you **radical**? How much more **ruthless** must you be?

Give your attention now to **verses 12-13**. *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another.*

*Tender mercies* and *kindness* deal with how we treat others. To be compassionate, to have a sincere desire for the good of the other person, to be so moved by his misery that we will act!

*Humility* and *meekness*, sometimes translated as *gentleness*, has to do with having an accurate view of myself, going the opposite way to self-interest, and having a basic disposition of being willing to yield, easily entreated. It is the opposite of being hard and harsh.

*Longsuffering* and *forbearance* and *forgiving* all have to do with what you do when others sin against you. When we are provoked, when we suffer due to others’ sin, the natural reaction is to hit back, to lash out. Here we do the opposite. We pursue peace with all men, painful as it may be. We forgive and be forgiving, we swallow the wrong done instead of making him cough out the penalty.

What do we do when we find these missing in our lives?

Paul says, “*Put on!*” It is deliberate and it is daily. Deliberate because they are not part and parcel of our nature. By nature, we do not show tender mercies and kindness, we are not humble and meek, and longsuffering, forbearance and forgiveness. So deliberate effort is needed! So deliberate that you actually go against the grain of your nature!!

And do it daily! Last night, you went to bed in a sweet frame, resolved to forbear and forgive. This morning when you wake up, you are ready to make her into meatballs and eat her up! Friends, it is a daily thing! You have to deliberately put them on daily!!

Like what is said concerning **verse 5**, there’s no holiday, no sabbatical, no demilitarized zone. You let your guard down, you take it easy, and before you know it, you are a monster of cruelty and revenge and hatred and bitterness instead of a saint of kindness and meekness and longsuffering and forbearance. This is the effort we are talking about – **radical and ruthless**.

Before we end the sermon, come and revisit those 3 sets of verses: **verse 5, verses 8&9, verses 12&13**.

**Verse 5, 8 & 9** -- what are they? They are ‘us’! This is who we are by nature. This is what reigns in our hearts before our conversion and this is what remains in our hearts now, after our conversion.

Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness – that’s us! Anger and wrath and malice and blasphemy and filthy language and lying – that’s you and that’s me!

The world says, “*Be yourself!*” If you obey that, our life will look at **verse 5 and 8 and 9!** Be yourself? No way! Not if I am a Christian!!

Do you take pride in being an honest, straightforward person? What the Chinese call “straight intestines”? “*Oh, I say what I feel, I just say what is in my heart!*”

Look at these 3 verses again. That’s what in your heart. Are you sure this is what we should be doing --- just say what is in our hearts?

Turn your focus now to **verses 12-13**. What’s that? This is Christ! You want to know what is tender mercies and kindness? Look at Christ! You want the perfect illustration of humility and meekness? Look no further than Christ! You want to understand what is longsuffering and forbearance and forgiveness? The name is Jesus Christ!

***Enjoyment empowers effort. Enjoyment of Christ empowers effort to be like Christ.***

We love Him so much, we delight in Him so much, we enjoy Him so much, we want to be like Him, and we want to be more and more like Him.

Be yourself? No way! Be like Christ!