

Let's get started. Colossians 3. I'm going to start in verse 1. Although we have already covered 1-5, I want to reiterate verse 1, and from there we will get into verses 5-17. I won't do a great bit of detail in marking that out, because I think it's an issue you know, but we'll see what the Lord wants to do here.

Colossians 3 starting in verse 1. "If then you have been raised with Christ, . . ." I'm just going to stop there. In the first two chapters, he has been talking Christology. He has simply been saying, "This is who Jesus Christ is. This is what He's done. Here's the deity of Christ. Here's the sufficiency of Christ. Here's why we put our trust in Christ." And now he's shifted, and in the first verse of chapter 3, he's no longer talking to everybody. He's not talking to everyone. Although chapters 1 and 2 are to everyone about, "This is who Christ is," now verse 3 goes, "If you have been raised with Christ. . ." So now the book is shifting from who Christ is to the people of God. This is why this is so important. In almost all of the letters of the New Testament written by Paul, there is a real specific rhythm that those books take on. The intros are very similar, how he closes those books are very similar and how he builds them out are very similar, sans 2 Corinthians, which is a book written in response to questions he was asked. And so, the books are almost all set up like this, "Here is the nature and character of God, here's what the gospel is and now, in light of this gospel, here's how one behaves, so that Christian behavior always follows being a Christian." This is so unbelievably important because if you don't get that, if you don't understand that, then you think that behavior and modification of your behaviors is what saves you. And Christ actually came to destroy that. And so, the only other book I can think of is Romans that kind of starts with, "You're wicked, you're wicked, you're wicked and Christ is great. Now behave like this if you believe the gospel." And so this is the flow. And I've told you that now that Colossians is going to shift into Christian living, I'm going to keep bringing you back to Colossians 3:1 that says, "If you have been raised with Christ. If you are a believer in Christ, then hear me in this." So let's read this, and you'll see. I don't think anyone is going to have an "aha" moment.

I'm going to read quite a bit of this, verses 5-17. "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. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Now I love what Paul does here. He's got these giant things that everyone agrees on to be sinful, like sexual immorality, impurity, passions and wickedness. But then he rolls it down onto an everyday level and says things like anger, malice, slander and lying to one another. He's going to list it out in such a way that nobody in this room gets off clean.

"Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." Whether you've got a background in church or whether you have no background in church, this isn't a surprise to you. This is basic "Christians behave this way; they don't behave this way. We do this if we have been raised with Christ and we do not do this." Now there is a great deal of points of tension in that idea. Let me point out a couple of them. Paul is saying that if you have been raised with Christ, then put these things away because we don't do this, and yet he's telling us to not do those things. That's tension number one. Tension number two is that if you are honest with yourself, most of us do something on this list. Now maybe you don't do everything on this list, but nobody got in here clean tonight. Even if we just look at this limited list of anger, malice, slander and lying to one another, the bulk of us realized today (we were at the pool, wherever we were this afternoon) that church is going to start soon and we've got to hurry up. So you get home, maybe you beat one of your kids, you got dressed, you got in the car, you screamed at one another, "Why do you take so long to get ready?" you get here, you give one of the parking guys the bird, you park, you come and you sit down and open up your Bible and now you're ready to worship. You haven't come in here clean. There isn't anyone in this room who has walked into this room righteously.

All of us have fallen short; all of us have failed. And for most of us, that's an extremely frustrating reality that there are still residual affects of our sinful nature that dwell in us. We have thoughts and actions and desires that are wicked, and they are in there. Maybe they are visible, because some of these are visible; and some of these aren't visible at all. Some are external, some are internal and some are either/or. So anger can go external, but it can also be internal. And one of the sad realities of the Bible Belt is that the bulk of us think that, since we've controlled our external anger, we're somehow free and no longer sinning. And this is just basic Bible belt misconception about the gospel of Jesus Christ. "If I can control my external behavior, I am free." And that is just simply not the truth. And let me just clarify this one point. And the reason I said most of us are frustrated with this residual affect of the Fall is because some of you aren't bothered by it at all. You don't even think it's there. You're just God's gift to us all. You just don't struggle like that. You just have a big Superman thing on your chest with your cape waving in the wind, spiritually speaking. And here's what I need you to hear me say to you. 1 John says you're a liar and a fool and the truth of God is not actually in you. You have deceived yourself and that in the light of the glory of Christ, you are going to feel naked and terrified. The understanding that we are in need of repentance is a mark of the truly converted, and where you don't believe and are not bothered by the residual affects of the Fall, you simply reveal that you don't understand what you're in or you're not a believer. And so that's my weekly, I doubt that you're saved speech.

Here's where things get complicated. If God is completely sovereign, which He absolutely is, and if we are saved by grace through faith, and even the faith to believe has been given to us by God, so that no one can boast in us, if that's true, then it seems to me that people get confused when it comes to how to mature in Christ. Since Christ started this work and began this work, what does it look like for us to pursue maturity where we don't then fall into the traps of legalism and we don't fall back into the trap of the checklist of things to do or not do so that we might continue to grow into the fullness and maturity of God? Let me read you a great quote by D.A. Carson, just a phenomenal author. I'm going to absolutely steal a phrase from him, and then I'm going to try to unpack in because he doesn't really unpack it in the book. In volume two of *For the Love of God*, D. A. Carson says this, "People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer and obedience to Scripture, faith and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith; we cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated." Now I love that quote. It's absolutely true. I've said it to you like this for years. Nobody accidentally becomes godly. Nobody stumbles into godliness. It just doesn't happen by accident. But how do you pursue godliness without falling into a checklist version of Christianity where you step outside of grace and begin to earn once again what was freely given to you?

So that's the question, because what we know about Christian living is that it's not static. It moves. It requires movement. But how do we do that? How does that work? And so Carson never really explains what "grace-driven discipline" is. So until he comes out with volume 3, you'll just have to hear from me what I think it is. And then we will wait and see from a man much smarter than I what he thinks that means. So here's my whole goal with you tonight is to go over six things that I think mark grace-driven discipline as we contrast it to legalistic mortification or trying to put your sins to death by the law and by your own will.

So six things, and here's number one. Grace-driven effort comes from a new heart. Jesus will say it like this, "He who has ears to hear, he who has eyes to see." So we're given a new heart by God. In Colossians 1, it says we are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Again in Corinthians you have this idea that we're walking in darkness and then we're brought into the light. In Ephesians, we were dead and now we are alive. Nicodemus comes to Jesus and says, "What must I do to have eternal life?" And He tells him what? "Be born again." And then Nicodemus asks the question, "My mom's not going to let me climb back into her womb?" Which I think is a legit statement. I know my mom is game for that either. In the end, Jesus is talking about this idea of regeneration. We are given a new heart. According to Romans 1, we are walking in darkness, deceived and buying into lies versus the truth and that God then justifies us by Christ, regenerates our heart and gives us eyes and ears to hear and see. All of the sudden, we have a desire to know the Lord, love the Lord, press into the Lord and make much of the Lord. Grace-driven effort cannot be manufactured out of a sinful heart. It is a new heart that grace-driven effort is born out of. That's who those who have been raised with Christ pursue the Lord through grace drive effort. They've been given new hearts.

For the legalist, that's simply not true. The legalist pursues God really out of a list of things. There are certain circles in the Bible Belt where simply doing the right things gives you a lot of clout. Like I'm involved in a lot of church planting and coaching church planters and things like that. At the Village, we spend a lot of your given tithes to church planting and supporting other churches, so thank you for that. Your reach goes far beyond what you could imagine in regards to what we do with the dollars that you give to this place. Here's what I've found. It's somewhat of a terrifying idea. Even with pastors and deacons and elders like that, do they genuinely love the God of the universe? Instead we ask, "Are they good leaders? Can they manage a staff? Can they teach?" There is this list of things that they do. But rarely is the question broached of, "Is there a genuine love for the Lord in their heart? Are there evidences of a regenerated heart?" And so here's what I mean. There are areas of our Bible Belt culture where you can become pretty powerful and pretty well-liked simply by living according to a certain standard that, at the end of the day, has nothing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. "We don't do this. . .we do do this. . .we don't go here. . .we do go here." You can live by that. And so really the motivation is not a new heart but rather the applause of men.

Now, I'm going to explain this and probably earn a couple of e-mails. In the end, another way this shows itself is sin. We will pit sin against sin. So to fight this sin, we pit this sin against this sin in the hopes that we can overcome sin. I'll give a couple of examples. I'll give you a predominantly male example and a predominately female example with an asterisk by it. I have seen quite a few men of all ages truly struggle with lust, pornography and masturbation. By their own will and their own power, they set out to beat lust and chronic masturbation. So we set up the gladiator arena, we've got lust versus self-righteousness. Now, regardless of who wins, sin won. So that's my predominantly male example. Now that's not all males, but predominantly that's the arena and the two guys battling. I learned a long time ago that women are very complex creature. So I know the one that God gave me and the two that He birthed into my home. But I have learned that you can't take this woman and go, "Women!" That's a complex, complex situation. So I made seven phone calls outside of the conversation that I had with my wife and I said, "What is the female equivalent to this?" And every one of them said a version of the same thing. Here's what they said. In the arena that the man puts lust and self-righteousness, a woman will put fear and anxiety in the ring with control and manipulation. And so a woman has fears or anxieties about her children, about her husband, about life and since she doesn't like that fear, she'll try to control and

manipulate situations and scenarios around her husband, around her children. She will begin to control and manipulate because of her fear and anxiety. Or she will realize that she is controlling and manipulative and then she will begin to live in fear and anxiety because she will try to stop controlling and manipulating. If those are in the arena fighting, it might be an epic clash. A lion might show up, the emperor might come out, it might be this dramatic, beautiful, epic war, but in the end, sin wins. And this is a very popular game when it comes to trying to put sin to death in us. We put sin against sin as though there is a winner that works, and it doesn't. So grace-driven effort is birthed out of a new heart, a regenerated spirit that was given to us by the Holy Spirit of God.

Number two is grace-driven effort uses the weapons of grace. There are three primary weapons of grace, the first of which is the blood of Christ. Let me read Ephesians 2:13. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Now let me tell you why I love this verse. This says that I have been brought near to God not by my own effort but by the blood of Christ so that my right standing has little to nothing to do with me, but the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. There are times when I fall. I'll be real frank and honest and straight with you. There are times that bad things happen to certain people, and I'm glad that they happened. There is this thing in me that goes, "Yes, justice!" Now, I don't want justice for me. I want grace and mercy and God to go, "I'm not going to catch you on fire." But there are other people, and I'm like, "God, will You blow him up? Like literally, if You can blow him up, will You blow him up?" And so if something good happens to that person, I'm like, "Ughhh." If something bad happens to that kind of person, I'm like, "Yes!" Now that is absolutely wickedness in me, and you've got your areas too. I'm not the only one unclean, so don't judge me. You're not sitting there spotless and pretty. We all have these areas, and maybe we don't act on them. No one would ever see that. I don't ever do that out loud. If someone goes, "Hey man there's been a horrible accident." I don't respond with, "Yes! Oh what hospital are you guys at. Okay I'll be right there." That's not how it works. That's not external. It's absolutely internal, but it's wicked and it's there. And so I have to constantly remind myself in those moments that God doesn't love me because I obey the law, He loves me because of the blood of Christ. And I have acceptance with Him and free reign to come to Him, not because I'm doing well or not going well, but because He shed His blood for me and through the lenses of that blood, He sees me as spotless, perfect, His adopted son. And so we fight that residual sinfulness in our hearts with the blood of Christ.

We also fight it with the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." And so, I'm going to come back to that one here in a second.

Let me do one more. We have the blood of Christ, the Word of God and the promises of the New Covenant. Hebrews 9:15 says, "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant." So under the first covenant, under the law, everybody fails. We already covered it. Nobody in this room is clean. You're not clean today. You're not clean the last couple of hours. Everyone in this room has fallen short of the law. It is the purpose of the law to show you that you fall short. The purpose of the commands in Scripture is to show you how inadequate you are to follow those commands. The promise of the new covenant is that where you have stumbled and earned the wrath of God, Christ has intervened. That's the promise, that a death has occurred that erased the curse of the old covenant. So now we're in the new covenant, and we are spotless and clean because of Christ.

Now, the reason why you will hear as long as you're in church. . .At least if you're in a real church and by real church I mean the ones that preach the Bible and point out the real gospel, because if those pieces aren't in place then it's not church. I don't know what it is. It's humanitarian, it's Unitarian, it's lets get together and talk bout God, but if it's not the gospel and it's not coming out of the Scriptures it's just simply not the church. It might be Kiwanis, Rotary Club or something like that but they need to take church out of their name because historically and Biblically speaking they

are not one. And so the reason you're going to hear us saying over and over and over again that you need to know the Scriptures and you need to know the Word of God is because the blood of Jesus Christ and the promise of the new covenant are found in them. So the Scriptures become the primary weapon of grace against the residual effects of sin. So when I have the thought of, "Yeah, I'm glad they burst into flames," and then all of the sudden I begin to hate that wickedness in my heart, I don't run from God, but I run to Him. It is the mark of Christian maturity that when you stumble and fall, you run to God; you don't run from Him. It shows that you clearly understand what the gospel is. It is also a clear indication of your immaturity when you stumble and fall and run away from Him and try clean yourself up in order to come back. So we fight the residual effects of sin with gracedriven effort.

The legalist, however, uses his own vows and resolutions, his own might, his own effort and his own creative "I'll do this. . . I won't do this. . . I won't go here. . . I will go here." He also uses the law in a different way. He uses the law in a way that says, "If I keep the promises of the law, I'll gain eternal life." Or he uses the fear in the law that says, "If I break the law, I'll go to hell." And so he uses the law to try to conform himself to perfection, but it has never worked for anyone. It's an arrogant thought that you're going to be the guy that pulls it off. First of all, you would have to believe right now that there has been no error in you up until this point. And I love you, but if you believe that, you're a fool. I would tell you that you couldn't pass the Ten Commandments. I'm not saying you would miss a couple; I'm saying you would fail. You would flunk kindergarten ethics. You are a liar, you do covet, you do have anger in your heart, you have worshiped other things besides God and you have chased other things as ultimate. You are not scoring a 20-30% on that thing. Here are the two great rebellions. Some people are going to try to find freedom by breaking all the rules, and some people are going to try to find freedom by keeping all the rules. Both of them scream out, "I don't need you God." So we fight by grace given weapons.

So here is the illustration that I've used for really seven or eight years that I'm reminded of again because we have a one year old. Audrey is seven-years-old now. She's our indicator of how long we've been here. When we first came here we were pregnant with Audrey. So the taller Audrey gets and the more she starts doing things like texting us and stuff, we're going "Wow, we've been at the church a long time." But one of the things I noticed in her very early on was how she learned to walk and the silliness around how she learned learn to walk. We have late walkers. All the Chandler babies walk at like 13 or 14 months. My wife could tell you the exact time, location, and all of that, but I just know somewhere in there. We don't have early walkers. What I noticed then and what I'm noticing right now is that for all our kids it's the same. We have the same furniture now that we did when we moved here. They pull themselves up on the coffee table or couch and they slide themselves along while holding on. And then they will take their hands off and waddle and then grab hold of something real quick. And here is really where the creative design of God occurs. You start to see it and marvel in it. What will happen is they will let go and for whatever reason on that day, physics take over. I know that all kids are different, but predominantly kids have fat, fat heads and skinny, skinny bodies. Now there are babies that defy that. My youngest is that. We've have little snake babies with giant heads up until this point, and then Norah has just rubber bands all over her. She's just full on chunk. So it will be interesting to see if physics takes over on her. But here's what they do. They let go of it, and then the fat head falls forward and now physics takes over. In that moment you've got two choices as that fat head begins to lead the body forward: you either stick your foot out or die. See you're still mainly cartilage and so they stick the foot out. Now with physics, we've got momentum. So step, step, step, fall, and then what happens? The place freaks out. It's like you just cured cancer. "Yeah! Are you tweeting it? Okay, you tweet it. I'll retweet. Okay, are you going to post it on your Facebook? Did we get video of that?" And so there's this kind of monumental celebration of the fact that your kid took three or four steps and then fell down. So, here I am all these years later with three kids of my own. Almost all of my friends now have kids. When we first had Audrey, we didn't have any friends that had children, and now, here's where I am in life—minivans are cool. There was a moment when all the friends who were in our circle were like, "Not us," but by the time that second or third kid rolls around it's like, "That's very practical." So that's where I am in life in the middle of that right there. Of those kind of pictures and images of your children walking,

in all of my circle and my friends, I've never seen any of the parents respond to step, step, step, fall by going, "Idiot!" I've never seen a father or a mother point to their kid who falls after four steps go, "This kid is a moron. For a bacon bit I can make the dog walk on it's back feet for two miles." The parents never get in a fight, "Baby this is your family. This stuff is not in my family. We're walkers; we walk. So this is on you. I know I've got some stuff that I've passed on to the kid, but this is you." I've just never seen that happen. There is always this explosion of rejoicing that took place over four steps.

Now what we have learned in Colossians is that these things are shadows of a deeper, more beautiful reality. Because of grace and because our Heavenly Father doesn't see through the lenses of our perfection but rather through the lenses of His Son's perfection, there is this rejoicing over this step-step-step-fall. There is this rejoicing over step-stepstep-fall because they're walking. Maybe there is an angel up there going "Meh...I don't know...that kind of looked like he was falling." And then God's like, "Do you want to go down with the demons? No? Then shut your mouth. He's walking. I say he's walking. Jesus, Spirit, good job." And you've got this celebration over children walking.

And once again, I want to continually add that you show yourself to be immature where you fall in that moment and go, "Oh I'm ashamed. God wants nothing to do with me." No. You get up, you sit down and He gets His iPhone and gets ready to shoot it and tweet it to the world. We begin to be agents of reconciliation, ambassadors for His name and renown. We stumble and fall, but we run to Him.

We are trying to teach our children, particularly my son, responsibilities. Adolescence has gone out of control. I think adolescence right now goes to like 28 or 29. It's a horrible time to be a godly woman in a world full of 28 year old, non-job having, living with mom, video game-playing boys. In the middle of all of this, we are trying to have our boy grow up while at the same time wanting to let him have fun with a lot of grace. So we make him clean up his own mess, but if you have kids, you know this. He never really cleans up his mess. He just smears it everywhere. Then we go in behind him after him and he thinks he did clean it up. So if you have children, you know exactly what I'm talking about. All they really do is smear it into the crevices, and you go "Good job, buddy. Alright, good job. Go on upstairs and out new clothes on." And then you have to clean up after he leaves. This is what you do when you decide, "I'm going to go clean myself up and come back before the Lord." You simply reveal that you don't understand the nature of the gospel, because you can't clean your self up, you just smear it. There is no less of it there. You've just smeared it into the cracks and crevices so that maybe you feel better about you, but it still remains. So grace-driven effort comes from a new regenerated heart, and grace-driven effort uses the weapons of grace.

Grace-driven effort attacks the roots and not just the branches. I'll say it this way just to be really frank with you. There is a reason that you're a crappy husband, there is a reason that you're a crappy father, and there is a reason that you feel the need to tear down and point out the flaws in other women around you. We have deceived ourselves so that our actions, who we actually are and what is in our hearts are somehow separate. We think that we are not wicked and in need of repentance and we just need to modify this behavior. And so we set out to modify a behavior when in the end, you can't mow over the weeds. Our whole Recovery ministry is built around what is going on in your heart, not the external action. Now external actions are great to show you that something has gone wrong with your heart, but if you come and you go, "My marriage is a wreck. Help me fix my marriage," more often than not, one of you (maybe both of you) has a wicked heart issue. Until the heart issues are resolved, trying to tweak how you work out your marriage is chasing your own tail. It's trying to catch the wind. It's picking up oil out of a bucket of water. It's not going to work. If you have lust issues, anger issues, and slander issues, ten times out of ten what you have is a heart issue, not an external issue. Recovery here, deliverance here is an attempt to get you to look at the heart and pay attention to what is going on in the heart. Because grace-driven effort knows where the enemy lies, and it doesn't like in some external action. It lies in an internal idolatry. So that's where we go to attack it and pull it up by the root. We don't just trim the branches. That's a sign once again of a misunderstanding the grace and mercy of Christ. A true understanding goes, "What is wrong with us is our hearts

not some behavior that needs to be modified?" Where the heart is changed, so is the behavior. You don't change the behavior to get to the heart; you get to the heart so that the behavior might be changed.

I like the next one because it's so contrary to what many of us have been taught. Grace-driven effort fights for a reason that goes well beyond conscience and peace. Grace-driven effort isn't motivated by the fact that when I sin, I feel bad about me. Grace-driven effort is birthed out of understanding that, when we sin, we make light of the God of the universe, we belittle and smear His name and we grieve the Holy Spirit. So grace-driven effort isn't, "I need to change, because when I do these things, I feel bad about me." Grace-driven effort is built upon, "I've grieved the Holy Spirit and I have sullied the image of the God of the universe." So our hearts break because God has been so good and so beautiful to us, and we have mocked and belittled Him with our actions and attitudes. So grace-driven effort is birthed out of the place of, "I can't believe I've done this." David said it this way, "I have sinned against You alone. You alone have I sinned against." It holds the idea that I have mocked and belittled the God of the universe. So our motivation in mortifying sin, our motivation in seeking to put sin to death and to live a godly life is not built upon, "I feel bad when I do this." Once again, that conviction is a great indicator of a heart issue, but our motivation to transform is not, "I hate this about me. I hate this about me. I hate this about me."

Here's how I know this to be true. Paul makes a great distinction between worldly sorrow and godly repentance. For those of you who know the Scriptures, worldly sorrow is, "Oh I got busted and I've made a mess of my life. I hate that I've made a mess of my life." Paul says that is worldly sorrow. Be careful of it because you can look at it and think, "Oh it's repentance. Look at him. He's crying." But Paul is also very clear to go, "Worldly sorrow in the end leads to death." But godly sorrow goes, "I have offended God on High," and leads to repentance. "I will not live this way any longer." The motivation for killing sin in our lives is not that we might ease our own conscience, but that we might not dirty our souls and in so doing make light of the God of the universe and belittle His name.

Grace-driven effort comes from being dead to sin not just forsaking it. The believer will not serve sin because his nature is contrary to sin. Do you know the passage in the Scripture that says you won't be tempted beyond what you can bear because God is faithful? Usually when you hear that text preached, here is what you will hear, "God will not put you in a situation that you can't get out of." I would tell you to go back and look at that text and look at it this way. Because you've been given a new heart and the weapons of grace, there is no situation that you can't get out of. So it's not that God has to go, "Oh I have to be really careful of him there, because there, he's not ready for that type of warfare and he might get worked over so I'm going to keep him over here." But rather, it's that if you understand that you have a regenerated spirit because the Holy Spirit is inside of you and you understand the weapons of warfare, there is no situation and scenario that you can't get out of by those weapons of grace and by that regenerated spirit. So that's what I mean by the fact that we are made alive. You don't have to say yes to your sin. Now, if you haven't been raised with Christ you have no choice; you are in bondage to sin. But if you have been made alive, brought into the light and sealed with the Holy Spirit, you do not have to say yes to your sin. You are not bound to it any longer. You can say no, you can walk away and you can walk in freedom.

That brings me to my last point and the one I love. Grace-driven effort is violent. It is rage-filled and violent. And those are not the words that usually accompany Christianity. Now this isn't violence towards another person; this is violence towards that residual sin inside of us. For those who have been made alive in Christ, our nature is a holy nature, and it hates the residual affects of sin. It wants it to die. It wants to put it to death. It's not going to give it quarter, it's not going to give it room, it doesn't just want to starve and control it, it wants it dead. Grace-driven effort wants to murder (which is this word in the Greek) and put to death these things. It wants to murder sin in our heart and will be diligent to put said sin to death until it is dead. It is very serious about mortifying the flesh. It is very serious about putting to death wicked thoughts and wicked ambitions, both seen and unseen. And for the bulk of you, most of what you will wrestle with will

be unseen. Most people won't see it. What I have found is that the legalist more often than not doesn't necessarily to put to sin to death. They just want to control it. They want to train it. They don't necessary want it to die. Here is how it shows back up. Because you don't want to murder it and because you want it to be your pet, when you get tired and frustrated and angry or when you feel entitled and somebody isn't giving you what you think you are owed, you run to that sin for comfort rather than to the God of the universe for comfort. This is why so many of get stuck in this cycle of sin where you do really well for a season and then you fall back into it. It's because you haven't tried to kill it and put it to death. You have simply tried to train it.

Every now and then, there is a show on the Discovery Channel called "When Animals Attack." Have any of you ever seen this? I absolutely love the show. Nine times out of ten, I'm cheering for the animal. I just want to be straight with you. And in one scene, it was these guys fishing in a canoe in Alaska and this grizzly just charges them. And I just thought, "I mean what do you do?" Um, pray. That's what you do. You've got a fishing rod and you're in a canoe when here comes an apex predator. The second one was this company wanting to sell watches and had this really beautiful model come and lay down with this lion, and then the lion attacked her. I'm like, "Yeah, because it's an apex predator. That's what they do. They kill everything else. Nothing hunts a giant male lion. The giant male lion hunts everything. If they get hungry enough in packs, they'll hunt like elephant and giraffes. They are apex predators." So I say this, if you put enchiladas in front of me, I am eventually going to eat them. Maybe not tonight. Maybe I gorged myself on queso and chips beforehand. Maybe I had salsa or some guacamole. Maybe I'm just not in the mood, but eventually I am going to eat the enchiladas. And on this night, the lion turns and eats the girl, and everyone is like, "This is crazy!" No it's really not. You just laid some enchilada on him. He was hungry and he ate. So here's what happens. We have a little pet sin, and we think we've got it controlled. Then it turns on us and destroys us and we are thinking, "This is crazy. Where did this come from? How did this happen?" Well you gave quarter to something that you can't really control in the end. And for all the bravado, "I've taught him to sit. I've taught him to roll over. I've taught him to beg. I've taught to shake. I've taught him to speak." For all the "I've controlled him," it only takes the right circumstance or the right setting for him to turn and do what he was created to do, which is deceive you and destroy you and kill you and lie to you. You buy in, and you're right back to square one. So grace-driven effort is violent because it understands that the lion is out to destroy. The lion is seeking someone to devour. The man of the house understands that if he is devoured, there are other people that are wounded by him being devoured. There is collateral damage to his failure as a man. So he puts the lion down. He doesn't just starve him; he starves him to death. He doesn't strike him once; he strikes him and strikes him and strikes him and will not quit hitting until he's dead. Grace-driven effort is violent. I think some of the reasons that a lot of you have been stuck in frustration for a long time is that you are simply not violent enough towards your sin. You have somehow said that these sins are respectable sins. You have said, "These things I can deal with." But you forget that out of the same heart that would harbor anger, malice and slander comes murder, wickedness, lust and deceit. An idolatrous heart leads to idolatrous actions. It explodes like a volcano that's dormant if you're not careful.

And so now, I want to wrap this whole thing up by going back to verse 11. And then we will thank God that he is so gracious and so good to us to give us these weapons, and to give us this grace, and to see us as perfect when we still stumble about. Colossians 3:11 "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." Now, the Village Church is my favorite place to preach, and I'm not just saying that because you pay me to say that. I'll tell you why. There is a diversity here that really isn't in most locations that I get to go preach. So if Desiring God wants me to speak at a conference, I pretty much now what is going to be in the crowd. If Resurgence wants me to do a conference, I pretty much know what's going to be in the crowd. If Catalyst, if Exponential asks me to speak, you pretty much know what you are getting into. There are theological frameworks, philosophical frameworks, and nine times out of ten in a conference setting you know exactly what you are walking into. But here, we are all over the map. There are some of you that have grown up in church your whole life. You were born in church. You have obeyed all the rules, and by obeying all the rules proved that you have no real need of God. You are great church

kid. There are others in this room that have broken all the rules and take great pride in the fact that they've broken all the rules. And there are some of you that are the great Bible Belt hybrid of that. Like on the Lord's Day you're awesome, you tuck in your shirt and you go to church every Sunday, but the rest of the week, you live like hell as though the Lord's Day is the only day of the week that God is awake and paying attention. You act like He gets up on day seven and says, "Alright, let's check out what's going on down there. Look at this, everybody is in church. Spirit, Jesus, I'm going back to sleep a little bit. I'll see you guys in about six days." And then He sleeps, and then you go and do whatever you want. So you're just an absolute wicked hypocrite that thinks you're getting away with something. It's you that the Scriptures are addressing when in the end Jesus says, "Depart from me you accursed for I don't know you." You are whom He is addressing, and you're living as though you have deceived or tricked Him. It's a foolish, foolish endeavor. And then there are some of us who are neither. Maybe you were invited by a friend or pestered or dragged here by a spouse, and you're curious but you're not really sure what to do with it. We're just a big, goofy beautiful mess. But here is Paul's point in Colossians. It doesn't matter. Regardless of where you fall on that grid, there is one answer, Christ and Him crucified. He is in all; He is for all. There is one hope that we all share, and that's Christ. So if you lived in such a way that you don't need God because you obeyed all the rules, your only hope is Christ and His cross. And if you've lived in such a way that you don't need God so, "I'll break all the rules," your only hope is the Cross of Christ. Regardless of whether you're wealthy or poor, whether you are pretty or ugly or (God help you) pretty-ugly, regardless of where you fall on the grid, there is one hope, Christ and Him crucified. It's all we've got. It's our only hope. My prayer tonight is that you would seriously contemplate whether or not you're walking and living under grace or whether or not, with all your effort, you are building your hope on your own effort. Surely that has to get exhausting. Surely there is no freedom that you are finding there. My prayer is that you might understand and grasp that we have one hope, Christ and Him crucified. Righteousness will not be obtained by obeying the law.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. And I thank You for an opportunity now to respond to these truths and these things by singing these realities, that You have saved us, that You have delivered us, that You have purchased us, that You will grow us and that our role is really to walk under and in grace, using grace as weapons, using the effort that grace supplies, walking the regenerate heart that You have given us and to pursue You and chase You and to grieve over grieving Your heart and sully Your name and mocking Your perfections. So help us now, and lift the veil a bit so that we can see clearly where our hope has been put in our ability and not on Your grace. So as we sing, stir up our hearts to You, stir up our minds to You. My prayer would be that we see clearly for the first time. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."