

# Colossians 3:10-11

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[0:00] Let me invite you to take your copy of God's Word, which I hope you have with you today, and turn to Paul's letter to the church at Colossae. It's the book of Colossians, chapter 3.

I remind you as we begin that this is God's Word to us, that it was written for His glory and for our good, and that we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

As a way of introduction, just to be sure that everybody's on the same page together this morning, I'm going to remind you, this is a letter written by Paul. It's one of his prison epistles. He was likely imprisoned in Rome. We don't know this for sure, but this is probably where he was at.

And he's writing to a church that he did not found. We believe that Epaphras founded it. Again, we don't know this as fact, but it's largely accepted this is the case.

It's in that Epaphras became a believer, became a disciple of Christ upon visiting Paul in Ephesus. He traveled back to his hometown of Colossae, and the church there was begun.

[1:08] Colossae was a rather insignificant town. That's of great encouragement to me that one of Paul's most beautifully theological books was written to a town that was fairly obscure.

Rome had recently moved the highway around Colossae and through Laodicea, and it was kind of falling into unimportance in the time.

And the encouragement to me in that is that there is no unimportant church. The city itself may have been unimportant, but what was happening in this church mattered.

It grieved Paul as Epaphras has traveled to him and reported to him that there are some heresies encircling and within the church. And Paul is then compelled to write this letter to them.

We don't know the exact nature of the heresies. We can pick up on some clues in it as Paul teaches as he addresses unspecifically some of those heresies.

[2:03] But as we've seen so far in the first two chapters, Paul is establishing, in large part, the major effort of the first two chapters, is to develop a very clear Christology in the minds of the Colossian believers.

To be sure that they understand that Jesus is himself, the Son of God. He is deity, and that his sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for their salvation.

That they are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. There's no longer any need for a piling up of work to earn salvation. But as he always does, as he turns from the doctrinal to the more practical, he gives application in his letters.

He says, now because of these great truths, because of what God has done on your behalf, because of who you are in Christ, your life should begin to look this way.

And that's where we find ourselves in chapter 3. He's beginning to unfold this for us. Beginning of chapter 3, we're exhorted to, if we've been raised with Christ, if we are in fact Christians, that we are to seek the things that are above.

[3:16] That we're to set our minds on those things that are above, and not on the things that are on earth. We've died to those things, and now we're meant to live to Christ.

And this text that we're kind of narrowing in on in these couple of weeks, as Daniel came and read to us 5-17, he begins to tell us some things that we're to put off, our old self things, and things that we're to put on.

Things that we ought to be doing now as Christians. Last week I showed you that the primary exhortation of 5-17 is found in the last part of verse 9, and the first part of verse 10. Seeing that, you have put off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self. And we took as two points, we only developed point one last week, what that is to put off the old self. Stated in the negative, do not do these things any longer. And then secondly, to put on the new self. There, stated in the positive.

[4:19] Instead of those things, rather, you should live in this way. And to remind you of last week, to lead us up to our text today, we're to put off the old self.

He says it again in verse 5 and in verse 8, put to death therefore what is earthly in you. He doesn't mean so literally, but figuratively. Put to death those things. Mortify your flesh.

In verse 8, but now you must put them all away. And he gives us two lists. These aren't exhaustive lists of all sin, but they're very aimed lists.

They're very particular lists. And those were sins of unrighteous love, or misplaced or perverted love. We saw those as sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness.

And then secondly, sins of unrighteous hate or wicked hate. There are things in this world to hate rightly, properly, righteously, but this is unrighteous hate he's talking about.

[5:22] And we saw those to be anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, and deceit or lying. And he gives us in that text two reasons that we should put sin to death.

Firstly, that sin brings God's judgment. This is the thing that we invite upon ourselves when we sin. Verse 6, on account of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Now, those who are found in Christ, have put on Christ, are raised with Christ, using this language that he's used so far, those sins have been bore in Christ's body.

That wrath of God for us has been poured out on him. So that's not what Paul's saying. He's saying if we're in Christ, we ought not participate in these sins because this is the reason that the world is being judged.

These sins are the reason that God's wrath is coming. And those who are friends of God, children of God, part of his kingdom, should have nothing to do.

[6:28] With these things. We should want nothing to do with it whatsoever. No part in it at all. And secondly, we should put sin to death because sin is part of a believer's past.

Verse 7, Paul wrote, In these you too once walked when you were living in them. In the last part of verse 9, seeing that you have put off the old self.

That's who you once were. Your identity has changed completely now. You're no longer children of wrath. You're children of God. And therefore should look different from the world.

And this morning, we're going to begin to look at the second exhortation of 5-17. We're going to begin to look at it because we're only going to look at verses 10 and 11. And next week, I hope to tackle the rest through 17.

We'll see. But that is, put on the new self. Verse 10, I'll read to you again. And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

[7:35] And I want you to notice a few things about this. Let me see how many things. Three things I want you to notice about verse 10. Notice firstly that our sanctification is progressive.

Our sanctification is progressive. It's beginning phrase in verse 10, have put on the new self. The have put on is a single Greek verb.

It's in the aorist tense, which denotes a snapshot, a picture of a completed event. The English translation does a great job here putting it in the past tense.

You have put on the new self. Those of us who are found in Christ have been changed. We have been set apart. This is accomplished work.

It's already completed. But note then the rest of the verse, which is being renewed. Here, this which is being renewed, believe it or not, it's all one verb in the Greek, and it's in the present tense, which portrays an event that is currently happening with no respect to its completion whatsoever.

[8:47] It's in process, and it's going to continue to be processed. So we've been set apart, and we're continually being set apart. As

Christians, we have been redeemed.

We have been made new, but yet we still have our flesh, and we struggle with it, but we're being made new and perfect each and every day, moving towards the high goal of glorification in Christ. That day when we shed our earthly bodies, when we're set free from sin entirely, and we're found perfect in Him forever. It is as if to say, you have put on the new self, so put on the new self. You've put it on, so keep it on. It's essentially what Paul is communicating here in verse 10. And we have a sure promise of help in this.

Philippians 1.6, Paul writes, and I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. He began the work, and He will complete the work.

[9:53] And he writes this later in 2 Corinthians 4.16, So we do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away. Our inner self is being renewed day by day.

As I get a bit older, and for those of you who are guests, I'm 35, and I know that that's not old in many people's perspective, but I'm beginning to feel age as the years come on.

And it's encouraging to me to know that I'm being perfected in the spiritual sense as I'm becoming less perfect in the physical sense. I mentioned the wedding earlier, and yesterday I was changing a light bulb.

This one. Nope, that one. And all of the sound equipment was hidden in the back corner. It was all stuffed around. I couldn't move anything. So I decided to climb up on top of the bass amp to change the light bulb, and I fell off of it.

And took a huge chunk of skin out of my shin on a music stand. And I asked Wes if he was coming up later, can you help me change the rest of the light bulbs later?

[10:56] Because I just took a big fall. And he said, are you okay? And I said, yeah, I just wish I wouldn't hurt myself doing stupid things. And I used to do cool things and get hurt, and now it's just stupid things. So praise God that I'm being renewed in spirit day by day.

I'm being perfected, and I'm working toward that even as my body is wasting away. The late William Hendrickson, a 20th century New Testament scholar, said this of this text today, when a man is led through the waters of salvation, they are ankle deep at first, but as he progresses, they become knee deep, and they reach through the loins and are finally impassable except by swimming.

And he means that as a positive thing, a good thing that we must swim in God's grace in our understanding of the gospel. 2 Corinthians 3, 18, another expression of this truth, Paul says, and we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

So there's a progressive sanctification for those of us who are found in Christ. Set apart for a special purpose, the glory of God, and being made perfect in our lives.

Secondly, notice the means of our renewal. Notice the means of our renewal. Just read to you in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, for this comes, sanctification, this process of being changed from one image of glory to another, this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

[12:34] And we must ask the question, how does the Spirit of God, who exists within those who have placed faith in Christ, accomplish this? What does He do? And we talked about this at length last week, but I want you to see it again here in verse 10, in knowledge.

This phrase, in knowledge. I gave you a slew of texts last week. I would encourage you to go look it up if you care to see this in greater depth. But Romans 12, 2, the first part of that says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed, changed from degree of glory to degree of glory by the renewal of your mind.

Think differently. You are a child of God. Understand that truth. You don't have to be intelligent to be a Christian.

You don't have to be high-minded to be a Christian. But when you become a Christian, it necessitates upon you that you think. And that you think about God. You become a theologian when you become a Christian.

You must know the truth. We've been given God's revelation. He came down to become an author. He wrote us a book. And beloved, we should know it.

[13:49] This is the way that the Spirit changes us. There's further case for this. Colossians 3.16a. Later on in our text, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

And then Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3.16-17. I hope you're familiar with this verse. All Scripture is breathed out by God and it's profitable.

What is it used for? It's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. And what's the result of that? That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Our progressive sanctification is carried about by the Spirit in knowledge. He uses the Word of God to shape us. And if you're not finding, if you're in Christ and you're not finding that you're progressing in sanctification, more than likely, the diagnosis for you is read your Scripture. Know your Bible. Invite God to work it in your life by the power of the Spirit that you may be changed from one degree to the next. Thirdly, notice the end or the goal of our renewal.

[15:03] This last little phrase, is after the image of its Creator. Now, its is referring back to the new self. The Creator of that being Christ.

We are being made to look more like Christ or we are not His. We are being made to look more like Christ or we are not His.

If you have put off the old self and put on the new self, then there will be progress for you in godliness. This is the great work of God on our behalf. Changing our hearts.

Regenerating us. Taking the old dead us and putting in us a heart that beats for Him. You will progress in godliness if you are found in Christ.

Now, in verse 11, Paul does, upon first reading, a very curious thing. It doesn't follow in my logic and the way I think that this is where he would go next.

[16:01] difficult a bit to go. Verse 11 almost seems like it stands alone. Like it's like Paul suddenly had this random aside and he thought he would just throw it in for the fun.

Verse 11 reads, Here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

Let me show you the way in which that doesn't stand apart, that it is in fact logical and flows in what he's trying to say. He has been talking about these sins, these particular sins, these sins of unrighteous love or these sins of unrighteous hate.

He's been talking about these things and all of these sins are relational sins. They have to do with the way in which we interact with one another. I believe he's particularly talking to the church.

The way in which you interact with each other as Christian people. Certainly we can take the implications out beyond the borders of our body, but specifically this is what he's referring to.

[17:07] And so he's turning now and saying here is the proper way in which you should live. And he starts with these borders, these barriers that have been put up by people of the day.

The way in which they were so obstinate toward one another around these particular things. So he begins by breaking those things down. And in the next week we'll see the way in which they're meant to love each other.

In spite of your differences, in spite of your barriers, you should live this way together. This is a great exhortation for the church today.

Ephesians 2 13-16 says this, but now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility, the barriers of hostility between us by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

[18:20] It might reconcile us or bring us back into right relation both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. So the gospel cuts the head off the snake of hostility.

It does away with these barriers that are created by men. And they exist. They're real. They function in our world. We're going to look at this list of them here and these were barriers to be sure.

Paul mentions the dividing wall. These were lines that were not crossed in this day. The closest thing that I can think of in our modern day world is India's caste system.

And actually as I began to do some research on the caste system, it seems much looser than these barriers were in this day. These were strict things that everyone obeyed.

And he is saying that the gospel destroys those walls. It changes us in a very peculiar and wonderfully God-glorifying way in this world.

[19:25] So he tells us about some varying barriers. Firstly, the ethnic barriers. Greeks and Jews. These were people groups.

Real people groups that really exist. Bloodlines that exist. Greek and Jew. He talks about religious barriers. Those who were circumcised and those who were uncircumcised.

You know much of your Bible or history, you know that Jews were commanded to be circumcised and those outside the faith were uncircumcised. We would typically refer to these people as Gentiles.

I think all of us, unless somebody who hears of Jewish descent ethnically, are probably counted in that number. The uncircumcised that the gospel advanced to. We were able to receive the good news of Jesus Christ.

What a blessed thing that is. These things, these barriers have been broken down. There's a very serious level of animosity in this day between Jews and Greeks.

[20:24] Gentiles is a broader category. They had nothing to do with one another. Jewish people refused to enter into a Gentile house.

Refused to go into a Gentile house. You know why? Because they believed that all Gentiles aborted their children and put them down the drains in their homes. And therefore they couldn't go in or else they would be defiled.

Very severe judgment cast. Now some of this maybe happened, but all of them was the Jewish understanding. They would not eat a meal or purchase meat that was butchered by a Gentile. When they returned to Jerusalem, it was the practice. Not occasionally, but everyone that was Jewish when they returned to Jerusalem would show their disdain for the Gentiles by shaking the dust off their clothes and sandals.

To shortly be dirty back up as they continued in Jerusalem. It was a way of saying we're not even going to carry Gentile dust into our city. They hated them and the Gentiles the same.

[21:24] They returned the disdain for one another. Do you recall the reluctance of the apostles to accept Gentile believers? It was a difficult thing for them to get past, understand the gospel of grace.

I would encourage you to read Acts 10 and 11. You can read about Peter's vision, the way that God had to come and give him this vision and then Peter goes and sees conversions and spirit filling of Gentiles and then commends to the rest of the apostles that this is right and proper and a work of God.

A great deal of animosity between one another. And Paul is saying that the gospel destroys that division. The old man held to these things, the new man thinks nothing of them any longer.

He points out cultural barriers. He talks about the barbarians and the Scythians. The barbarian was a broad term for those people, particularly the Greeks and the Jews who tended to be a very educated people, to speak of those people who were uneducated.

They were inarticulate in their speech. In fact, the term barbarian comes from what they jested that they sounded like, that they just talked like this, bar, bar, bar, bar, bar.

[22:38] They said nothing intelligible at all. That's where this phrase barbarian comes from. The most feared of the barbarians were the Scythians. This was actually a people group.

The Jewish historian Josephus in Against Apion wrote, the Scythians delight in murdering people and are little better than wild beasts. Right? Hated.

The way they were as an aggressive people was hated by the Jews and the Greeks. Paul speaks of social barriers.

Slave and free. Slaves in this day had extremely low social standing. Less than people. Does that sound familiar at all?

Aristotle records that they were considered living tools to be used and then discarded. And the gospel here again breaks this down.

[23:34] Paul writes in Galatians 3.28, there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female. He adds yet another social barrier that's been abolished by the gospel.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus. He says it again in 1 Corinthians 12.13, for in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit. All of these differences that we have are no longer of any importance whatsoever because now we have Christ. The gospel of Jesus destroys them, breaks them down, ethnic, religious, cultural, and social, abolishes them altogether because it's phrased at the end of verse 11, Christ is all and in all. Christ is all and he is in all. And I believe what Paul is trying to say is that Christ is everything. He is the great equalizer. If we have Christ then we have the greatest thing in common that we could possibly have in common.

All of a sudden all of the differences between us become entirely insignificant because we have Christ. We are so apt as people to be a number of things, to define ourselves in a number of ways, to add up a list of things and somewhere in that list of things that I am I place Christian.

[25:05] Oh, oh and I'm a disciple of Christ. If you are in Christ you are a Christian first. Great difference between people in this world are those who are enemies of God and those who are friends of God, those who are outside of Christ and those who are in Christ.

This should be the first thing that we list, the first way that we think about ourselves. I am Nathan and I am a Christian and I do this or I do that.

I am married, I have children, etc. etc. etc. I am a Christian first. It should invade all of who I am. We are so apt to segment ourselves off as Christian people.

Beloved, this should not be so with us. We're drawn together by affinities and I think the great issue there is because we don't talk about Jesus Christ as much as we should. We don't talk about the thing we have in common and share in that enough, but we want to talk about whatever sports we're into, our favorite team, our gardens, what we're doing on our house, our children.

We should be talking about Christ more than those things. We could talk about those things, but more than those things, and we should see what we share in common. We should so love Jesus that we want to see the way in which he's working in other people's lives.

[26:24] We should hunger for that, to say to other people, how is the Lord working and changing you? I need to see a fresh picture of grace today. Sometimes I fail to believe the gospel in my activity, in my day.

I fail to remember that it has power to change me because I stop looking at the way in which it's working in other people's lives. We divide ourselves up by the stupidest of things.

This is why I am against affinity-based churches. They infuriate me that we target a particular hobby in order to build a church around a hobby.

It makes no sense to me whatsoever. I'm okay with hanging out with people that like to do stuff I like in order to share the gospel with them, but to do everything you do in order to attract a particular little segment of society, I think, it's my opinion, is sin.

people. Our evangelism, the way in which we go out into the world should be entirely indiscriminate. Entirely. Because we see people.

[27:29] The great thing that we have in common apart from Christ is our sin. People need salvation. Everyone is headed without Jesus to eternal destruction. There's the affinity. What do they need?

The gospel. This is how we should build our churches. Now it happens that we gather around affinity. There are a lot of college students in our congregation, are there not?

But that's based on relationship, based on people you know, and who you invite, and who you're sharing your faith with. That is good, and fine, and acceptable, but when we narrow our reach, I think it's sin.

Christ is all, and he's in all, the great equalizer, the great thing that we have in common. Back in the beginning of verse 11, Paul says, here there is not.

And this here refers back to verse 10, to the new self. This new self that's being renewed in the image of its creator. The NASB version, I think, renders this well to help us understand, says, a renewal in which there is no distinction between these varying barriers.

[28:42] A renewal in which there is no distinction between. It does not belong amidst the people of God. So this is what he says should not cause conflict.

There should not be barriers between these things, these ethnic, religious, cultural, social barriers. These are realities, real things, real barriers that should be abolished by the gospel.

But I want you to also see this morning what he doesn't say, what he doesn't talk about. Sometimes the silence of the scripture screams something to us.

And in this case, I think we need to see that he does not talk about race. He does not mention race. Not because race is not abolished by Christ, not because it didn't have the power to do so, but because race does not exist.

race is not a real thing. Before your head explodes, racism certainly exists.

[29:51] Racism is a thing that's been created. It exists, but race does not. And I'll tell you, as I go on to prove this to you, that reality makes racism extremely ridiculous.

It's childish. It's stupid. And we have men in some of the highest offices in our country that act as if everything hangs and depends on this reality of race and it doesn't exist.

I'd encourage you to stop listening to such men. Ethnic, religious, cultural, social barriers have a basis in reality. Race is based on features.

characters. It's based on appearances most prominently on skin color. Now, I'm not going to deal for a long time with this because we just don't have time.

I owe you guys a shorter sermon. I'm aware of that. There's more to be said about this, but I hope this will start a conversation concerning it. Anthropologists have agreed for centuries, centuries, that race is socially constructed, and that is to say that we invented it, that we made it up to serve our ends.

[31:04] Listen to this. This is an article written by the American Anthropological Association, and this is their statement on, and I love that they do this, quote-unquote race. Every time they say it in this article, it's race.

Here we go. Historical research has shown that the idea of race has always carried more meanings than mere physical differences. Indeed, physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them.

Today, scholars in many fields argue that race, as it is understood in the United States of America, was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America.

The English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought in to provide slave labor, created race in order to perpetuate the things they were trying to accomplish.

Further in the article, race thus evolved as a worldview, a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behavior.

[32:14] Racial beliefs constitute myths about the diversity in the human species and about the abilities and behavior of people homogenized into racial categories.

The myths fused behavior and physical features together in the public mind, impeding our comprehension of both biological variations and cultural behavior, implying that both are genetically determined.

Racial myths bear no relationship to the reality of human capabilities or behavior. Scientists today find that reliance on such folk beliefs about human differences in research has led to countless errors.

I'm going to sum that up for you in my terminology in case you lost me in that language. What they're saying is that race has been socially constructed in order to perpetuate ideas about people who look different and that the appearance of people has nothing to do with their ability as people. But we have tied the two together and invented this thing which I am calling racism. We categorize people in this way. A very severe example of this working out in our world with a tragic outcome is the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

[33:36] I hope you're familiar with this. I hope you are paying attention to the news and seeing these types of events. In 1994 in an approximately 100-day period from April 7th to mid-July, an estimated 500,000 to a million Rwandans were killed.

It is tragic to me that we have to estimate it, that we don't even know the real number of people that were slaughtered in this genocide. The mass slaughter of Tutsi were genocide by the Hutu in Rwanda.

Now to give you just a little background history, the Hutu were the people that were indigenous to the land of Rwanda. The Tutsi migrated from Ethiopia in the 14th century. Interestingly, the Tutsi were originally called the Kushites.

Anybody remember in the scripture someone who married a Kushite? Moses. Moses were married to a black woman, quote unquote black woman. But the Tutsi migrated from Ethiopia in the 14th century.

So 500 years have passed. Rwanda is a nation state. It was taken over by Germany after World War I was given to Belgium.

[34:44] This is kind of the background. This has become a people, the Rwandan people. This has happened. But in order to segregate them, many of the Tutsis had risen up.

They were in a lot of the ruling places. But in order to continue to perpetuate that, to keep that going, Belgium brought coffee production. They needed a large class of workers. They divided them.

You know how they divided them? They set a standard for what qualified you as a Tutsi and what qualified you as a Hutu. They took measurements. they required people to be cataloged.

They took measurements of their head size and their nose size and their height. The Tutsis were believed, it was postulated, that because they were from Ethiopia that they were more European and therefore were more excellent than the Hutu.

These people had lived together for 500 years. It had no real basis of ethnicity any longer. They were Rwandans and yet they were divided along these lines of measurements.

[35:47] So socially constructed, you see what I'm saying? They created two races based on appearance, two races, and the end result of that was a great hatred for one another that ended in this mass, mass genocide.

Severe example for sure. But do you not see the way those same types of things are at work in our nation? So what does the Bible have to say about race?

Number one, the Bible correlates Adam as the head of the physical humanity and Jesus Christ as the head of the spiritual humanity.

We have one descendant in Adam. We are the human race. We all have the same great, great, great, great grandfather. Noah, if you prefer.

And Jesus Christ is the head of the spiritual humanity. Read Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15, 20-22 says, But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

[36:51] For as by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

You're seeing the connectivity there. The scriptures support the idea that we have a single source for who we are as people. Secondly, the Bible makes the common origin of humanity God.

It goes a bit higher and above that. Acts 17, 24-26, this is Paul preaching. He says, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined a lot of periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. So Paul then draws the proper distinction between nation, ethnicity, but he draws us all up to God.

We have a single origin of our humanity. God through Adam and now our spiritual reality in Christ. The Bible speaks clearly that this race does not exist.

[38:12] And in light of this, genetic differences in our appearance is absolutely trivial. It has no meaning whatsoever unless we give it meaning.

So what's the application of this? Firstly, do not be made to feel guilty for the color of your skin or for your ethnicity. Do not find yourself lumped in a group in that way.

Refuse to be put in a group. Introduce yourself to somebody by your first name. Hi, I'm Nathan. I'm a Christian. know me for me.

When we get little survey forms on everything, everything you go fill out wants to know what race you are. If you don't have to check something, do nothing. It's a stupid question.

If you have to, do other. And if you have to fill something into the line, put in a, which stands for not applicable. This is a stupid question.

[39:15] It doesn't exist. We should not be dealing with it. Don't feel guilty for the color of your skin or your ethnicity. God made us all beautiful.

What a wonderful expression of God's creativity that we have different tones of skin, different hair. How wonderful that is. It should be grasped and appreciated and enjoyed.

Ignore those, as I said before, who constantly talk about race. You can rattle some people off in your head. I'll do it for you later. if you would like. Ignore them. Ignore them. Secondly, do not ignore that racism exists.

It does. It's at work in our world that ethnic, religious, cultural, and social issues do exist. Don't dismiss. Don't act like live in la-la land, like none of these things are realities in the world.

If we're to love people well, we cannot ignore their experiences. We have to recognize that there's a truth to their experience. We must recognize the challenges they face and the hurts that they experience.

[40:16] Don't dismiss racism, just dismiss race. Thirdly, talk about those ethnic, religious, cultural, and social issues. Talk about them. As the church, we should be engaging them.

As those who have had these barriers torn down for us, we should be the most enlightened people. We should be the most understanding of how the common struggle of man in sin and the common grace we have in Christ.

We should be the most clear-headed. We should be talking about these things and engaging these issues. But just stop talking about race. Just stop doing it all together.

I would strongly encourage you to do so. To quit categorizing people so readily in that way. Join with Paul as he says in 2 Corinthians 5.16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.

What does he mean? We look at people's spirits. We see people as eternal beings and we treat them as such. To give you an example of this, I think some of you in our church know who William Hollis is.

[41:20] I stole this off the fridge this morning. It's okay. I don't know, you probably can't see this.

It's oversight on my part. Probably the fact that you can't see William tells you a few things about William in this picture. It's a dark picture. This is my friend William Hollis. Many of you know him in the room.

And if I were to describe William Hollis, if I were to tell you about my friend William Hollis, what our culture is going to tend to do is say, I've got a friend named Will. He's black. And I have just put Will in a category.

I have placed him off for whatever the preconceived notions may be for the person I'm telling them about. I have categorized him in a way that is entirely unfair to him. I have supported this idea of race because I've connected the way he looks to a bunch of behavior and preconceived notions that people, good or bad, that they may have.

Rather than saying, this is my friend William Hollis, let me tell you a bit about who he is. He's a disciple of Jesus Christ. He loves the Lord. I am so incredibly encouraged by William.

[42:32] He's the husband of Beverly. He loves Beverly. He's the father of Jaden, the one that we have this announcement for. He's a former member of our fellowship. He used to go to North Georgia and he was a member of

our church here.

He serves our country in the U.S. Army. Then you may ask, what does William look like? It's a fair question, right? Oh, it sounds familiar to me.

What does he look like? I would say to you, not that he's black, he has a dark complexion, black hair and brown eyes.

This is the way we should be talking about one another. We have to be very careful with our language and our word because they carry with them weight and we are unknowingly perpetuating in so many ways unhealthy behavior in our church.

Talk about ethnic, religious, cultural, social issues, but stop talking about race. There's a reality to culture. There's a reality to ethnicities, not race. fourthly and lastly, love people with the gospel of Jesus Christ indiscriminately.

[43:39] Indiscriminately. Beloved, we should long for a church that is diverse. It should be something that's close to our hearts that we want to see happen. Not so that we can go around telling people that we have people of different race in our church.

This is not the goal of this longing, but that we can see the way that God works in varying situations. That we can see those barriers, those walls torn down.

Now, we live in a place, the county that we're located in, if you want to throw Hall County into the mix of that, that is like 92%.

I'm going to quote my finger, Caucasian. It's not even language I like to use, right? Of European descent. Stupid.

So, are we all going to tend to be fair-skinned? Probably. Probably, because of where we live. But it's something we should long to be different. We should want to have diversity in our church.

[44:41] And I don't think that we need to go seeking it out. I don't think we need to target people that look different than us. But as we see the opportunity, we should love people with the gospel indiscriminately. We should just extend it to everybody because we're all human and we all have sin and we all have destruction that's due it.

And we all need Christ. John 3.16 says this, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ is all and he's in all. Let's pray together.