

6. The rules of engagement of godly living -Part 1

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Before our troops go into the possible hostile territories, they are instructed about the rules of engagement by their commanding officers. In most case, it is "defend yourself if you are fired upon." Americans are supposed to be good guys, not like those towel head lunatic terrorists.

Tonight the Holy Spirit is going to teach us our own set of the rules of engagement of godly living in this vile and volatile world through Apostle Paul. God doesn't want us to act like the people in the world. He wants us to be different. He wants us to be Christlike.

We come now to the line of division in this little epistle, which conforms to Paul's regular way of dividing his epistles. He always gives the doctrinal section and then the practical section. Chapters 3 and 4 comprise the practical section of Colossians.

We have seen the preeminence of Christ in chapters 1-2. We have seen Him as He is, God Himself, a member of the Trinity. He is preeminent in creation because He is the Creator. He is preeminent in redemption because He is the Redeemer. He is preeminent in the church because He is the One who gave Himself for the church.

Now we have come to the place where Paul will insist that Jesus must be made preeminent in our lives.

We cannot just say, "I am a dedicated Christian," and then live our lives as we please as many people are trying to do today. No, if Christ is preeminent in our lives, then we are going to live out His life down here on earth. Because Christ is really the solution to all the problems of life.

A. THE BASIS FOR PAUL'S PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Paul begins a section where he focuses on practical Christian living. But practical Christian living is built on the foundation of theological truth. Because we know that Jesus is really raised from the dead, then our identification with Him becomes real.

We are told to seek those things which are above, and set our mind on things above. But how do we practically seek and set?

- By spending time in the Word of God. - Study
- By spending time in prayer. - Prayer
- By spending time with things that build us up in God instead of merely entertaining us. - Worship
- By gathering with others in the Lord. - Fellowship

V4 gives such comfort and peace to all of us that our brothers and sisters around the world can endure harsh persecutions and risk their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus.

B. LOSE 'EM, DUMP 'EM, GET RID OF 'EM

Colossians 3:5-7 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

After he had named these sensual sins, Paul added, “covetousness, which is idolatry”. Covetousness is the sin of always wanting more, whether it be more things or more pleasures. The covetous person is never satisfied with what he has, and he is usually envious of what other people have. This is idolatry, for covetousness puts things in the place of God. “You shall not covet” is the last of the Ten Commandments in Ex. 20:17. Yet this sin can make us break all of the other nine! A covetous person will dishonor God, take God’s name in vain, lie, steal, and commit every other sin in order to satisfy his sinful desires. Because that person is never happy with what he or she has from God.

Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

These sins invite the wrath of God. The wrath of God comes as God allows men to continue in sinful and self-destructive behavior, because they are determined to drag themselves down.

Simply put, the Christian should not live like the sons of disobedience. A true Christian can not be comfortable in habitual sin.

C. PUTTING OFF ALL THE GARBAGE

Colossians 3:8-9 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

The sins Paul next lists are regarded by many as “little” sins that Christians can overlook. Paul challenges us to put off the old man in every area of our lives.

Please note that all the sins that were listed in v8 and 9 have to do with our mouths. Yes, our mouths cause us more problems than we care to remember.

James 3:5-12 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

I believe one of the first sins a little child commits as soon as he or she learns how to speak is to lie.

I heard the story about the little boy who came running into the house and said, “Mama, Mama, a lion just ran across our front yard.” The mother said, “Willie, you

know that was not a lion. That was a big dog that ran across the yard. You go upstairs and confess to the Lord that you lied about that." Little Willie went upstairs and after a while he came down again. His mother asked, "Did you confess your lie to the Lord?" He answered, "Yes, I did. But the Lord said when He first saw him, He thought he was a lion, too!" Lying is something that is deep-rooted in the human heart, and many Christians still indulge in it.

I've seen and met many Christians who don't think twice about using foul languages. Whenever I hear them, I have to wonder about their walk with Christ. How can they use God's name in vain? What is their excuse for using even so-called mild foul words? Why do they have to use them? Can they not talk without those words? Yes, they can. They just want to be like the rest of the world.

I understand about the habit of foul language. I used to be one who spewed out a few chosen colorful words before I became a Christian. With the help from the Holy Spirit, it was stopped.

Again, it goes back to our choice. As the ambassadors of Christ, we can use proper language to represent our Savior to this dark world correctly or act like and talk like the rest of the world and misrepresent Him.

D. PUT ON THE NEW MAN

Colossians 3:10-11 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

If we take off the old garment, we need to put on the new garment. Because putting off is not good enough, we must live in the new man by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot just become godly people because we stop doing bad thing. The area where we eliminate must be replaced with godly stuff, otherwise it will get worse than before.

Matthew 12:43 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. 44 Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. 45 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."

God is a respecter of no man. The new man is part of a family, which favors no race, nationality, class, culture or ethnicity. It only favors Jesus, because in this new family, Christ is all and in all.

On the side note: Barbarians were those who were not Greeks, those whom we would call heathen today. The Scythian was the worst kind of barbarian and they were pagan, heathen, brutal, and mean! Scythia was north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The people who lived there were probably the most barbaric the world has known.

E. LIFE OF NEW MAN

Colossians 3:12-13 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, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

The new man is chosen by God. This means that God has chosen him to be something special in His plan. Sometimes we may wonder what God is going to do with our lives.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

We don't know what kind of plan God has for us. But I know one thing for sure. It is whole lot better than my plan for myself. I will take His plan over mine any day.

I am sure you have noticed that each one of the qualities mentioned in this passage express themselves in relationships. A significant measure of our Christian life is found simply in how we treat people.

Remember the criteria Jesus gave regarding how the world could judge His people:

John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Each of these qualities also tell us what it means to live in the nature of Jesus. Forgiveness is a 'must' in Christian life, but restoration is depend on the situation.

F. THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF GODLY LIVING

Colossians 3:14-17 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Love is the summary of all the things described in this passage. Love perfectly fulfills what God requires of us in relationships.

G. APPLICATION

1) Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.