

COLOSSIANS BIBLE STUDY

Colossians 3:1-11 (d)

Lesson #15

Introduction

Last week we got through verse seven of our study, so we'll begin today at verse 8 and continue through 11 if we can.

The Life of the New Man

1 So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God. 4 When the Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

5 Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient, 7 and you once walked in these things when you were living in them.

8 But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his practices 10 and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Col 3:1-11 (HCSB)

Now, continuing our study at verse eight let's read that verse and begin our discussion:

Verse 8:

8 But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.

Throughout the majority of Scripture the life of the believer is portrayed as a then, versus now contrast. The words used by the Bible to describe the new believer are very descriptive. Like born-again, regenerated, transformed, sanctified, converted, and renewed. These words signify a very stark contrast between that which is, and that which was. And in keeping with this general theme, verse eight begins with the words "but now" which themselves signify that something is different than it was before.

If you'll think about it, it seems that every conversion discussed in the Bible was of an adult who had the capability to recognize his or her previous condition. Jesus certainly did welcome children, but to the best of my knowledge there aren't any examples in Scripture of children actually being born-again and converted. Now please don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying that it can't happen, I'm just saying that this isn't the example presented in Scriptures. The Scriptures present the gospel as a message to those who are old enough to recognize their sin and therefore be convicted by it.

We remember well the words of Jesus when he said that He hadn't come to save the righteous but to bring sinners to repentance. Repentance means change. For anyone to change there has to be something previously existing from which to make a change. This is the meaning of change, it's ceasing to do one thing and beginning to do something else, that's what makes it a change. It isn't simply about adding something new, it's about ceasing something else first, and then taking a new direction that's different from the one before. This is the whole point of the "but now" at the beginning of this verse. It's an acknowledgment that we did do these things before, we practiced them and we desired them, but now we are to put them away. Which means stop doing them, it doesn't mean place them in temporary storage, it means permanently dispose of them. Do not place them into our practices anymore.

The list is simple enough. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language were once commonplace practices in the lives of all unbelievers. Now obviously we didn't all have the same degree of each of these. Some had more of one and less of another. But these were commonplace practices amongst all of us before we were converted. But now we're told to "put these away," which simply means stop doing them. It doesn't just mean we should feel bad about them, it means we should agonize over them when we see them surface our lives, because they're an affront to our Lord.

We could spend a lot of time on a detailed study of each of these words if we thought it was necessary, but these aren't difficult concepts, these are day-to-day emotions and feelings that are common to humanity. Nevertheless we might briefly discuss each of them just a little.

The first of these is anger. The Scripture says to put away anger. Does that mean we're never allowed to get angry again after we become Christians? Well that would certainly be nice, and it will probably work perfectly well in heaven, but it's unlikely we'll get through our time here on earth without encountering anger. The Scriptures are filled with references to the anger and wrath of God. The logical conclusion that we can draw from this verse is that it is discussing displays of anger. Particularly those which result from improper motivation. The Scriptures tell us to be angry but do not sin; don't let the sun go down on our anger. In other words, if you do get angry then don't let that anger result in actions which are sinful, and, get over it quickly, don't stew over it but rather let it go. That is, let the anger go. I'm not teaching that we aren't to hold people accountable for their actions, but rather that we do it in a calm and godly fashion, as did the Lord himself.

The second is wrath. One definition of wrath is extreme anger. Extreme both in its emotion and its consequential actions. Both in the Scriptures and in life we use the word wrath when we're talking about someone who is very, very angry, and is doing something extreme, and often violent about it. While the Scriptures speak plainly of the wrath of God, which will be demonstrated by extreme measures, nevertheless, we as Christians, are to put away such displays of anger. Wrath and vengeance rightly belong to God Himself, and will be exercised by Himself in his own time. Like it or not, we're told to put these away and leave them to God.

The third is malice. Malice is simply a desire to do someone harm for what ever reason. To see someone suffer. If ever there was a justifiable motivation for malice, it would have been Jesus as He hung on that brutal cross. But as He hung there and suffered unjustly, did He harbor malice toward his persecutors? No, quite the contrary, He said Father forgive them for they know not what they do. And, just so we don't think this is something that's reserved just for the Lord, we had the example of Stephen the first martyr, who, while being stoned to death by the Pharisees, with his last breath prayed that the Lord would not hold this sin to their charge. Obviously, there are many reasons why one might harbor malice in their hearts toward others. The Scriptures don't say that there aren't good reasons for malice, it simply says to put malice away. Just because there's plenty of good reasons, doesn't mean Christians are allowed to harbor or practice it. This isn't difficult to understand, and our Lord Himself, as well as our brother Stephen, showed us how to practice it in daily life. (Eze Chs. 18, 33)

The fourth one mentioned is slander. One definition of the word slander is the action or crime of making a false spoken statement damaging to a person's reputation. In the epistle of James, the Lord's brother, chapter 1 verse 26, James says that an unbridled tongue is a sign of a person who is self deceived about his faith. That to intentionally and repeatedly slander other brothers, for the purpose of harming their reputations, is a sign that this person isn't a believer at all. So our first thought is, does this mean that we mustn't critique other brothers beliefs, and other brothers teachings? The answer is, of course not. What differentiates slander from critique is the motive behind it and the objective of it. The motive of slander is intentionally to bring harm to others. The motive of critique is to find the truth to prevent harming others. The objective of slander is to cause harm, the objective of critique is to bring about good.

Therefore, we are instructed to be critical, and thoughtful, and always examining carefully, but with a motive that is pure, and holy, and righteous. However, regardless of our intentions, it's still very easy for any of us to cross this line if we're not very careful about our own heart's condition and our choice of words. James said that the tongue was like a fire set by Satan; an untamable evil set in the bodies of mankind. (Jas 3:8) And so it is, unless we're very careful to exercise restraint, and only seek that which is good and helpful, not that which simply is meant to be harmful to others.

Now the fifth one in the list is filthy language. There's many forms of filthy language as we all well know. We all find ourselves in the company of unbelievers who love to tell funny jokes that we know full well aren't appropriate for Christians. I expect we're all very familiar with this situation. Now it should be obvious that we ourselves are not to be the ones who are telling such jokes and using such language, that's simple enough. But what do we do when we're in the company of others who do? This becomes a difficult issue doesn't it? The good thing is, this verse does not tell us that we cannot work, or walk among unbelievers who use such language. It tells us that we, as Christians are not to use such language ourselves. Almost all of us are forced to work and live amongst secular humanity.

So, fortunately we're not told that we have to flee from the world, but rather that we aren't to partake of its practices ourselves. We can't prevent the office clown from making off-color remarks and cracking his little jokes. And sometimes it's difficult to know just exactly how to respond in these situations. But as Christians, we're not to promote, condone, or especially to participate in these practices. As we mature we learn how to best handle these situations, because they are unavoidable, but, they are also excellent opportunities to display the "but now" character of the born-again believer, who once also enjoyed these things "but now" no longer takes pleasure in this kind of talk, and demonstrates that tactfully but clearly for all to see. After about 30 years as a Christian I can testify that in these situations it's usually a balanced response that best serves the purpose of honoring the Lord and getting the point across that you don't condone these things. No response at all dishonors the Lord, and over reaction serves only to infuriate. This comes with practice and maturity. But the point is that all such filthy language, be it obscenities, vulgarities, swearing, taking the Lord's name in vain, or lewd and lascivious suggestions, are not to be found coming from the mouth of Christians.

Now I feel like I need to add something more here. If you're anything like me you probably have some secular friends who you care about. They know you're a Christian, and they know they aren't, but you're still friends. In these situations we're often invited by our friends to attend gatherings. One example I can think of is where I was invited to go to a club and listen to a comedian. My friends said that the comedian used extremely foul language but he was hilariously funny. You see to them, if it was funny then it was okay. Being funny, made being filthy, acceptable to them, and they thought it would make it okay to me as well. The fact is I've heard a few comments made by this comedian. And yes, they are funny. But they are also filthy, and for that reason they are not acceptable to me, even if they would make me laugh, they would make me feel defiled, and I would never be comfortable in such a situation. Therefore I had to tactfully decline. You see funny sin is just as destructive as any other sin, it's just wearing different clothes. **The disguise of humor doesn't change the wages of sin.** So my friends, don't be deceived and fall into this trap yourselves, sin is sin, regardless of what it might be cloaked in, and it will always have its same end result. (Rom 6:23) The Trojan Horse example

Verse 9:

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his practices

Verse nine begins with what might be considered a sixth point in the previous list. It says do not lie to one another. What are the main reasons that we as humans lie to one another? Well, there's lot's of different reasons. But probably the most common is so that we won't get caught doing something that we shouldn't have done. Another common reason is to get something that we want. And there's other reasons too.

But this verse isn't about the intricacies of lies, it's about putting off, ceasing to practice, abstaining from a former style of life. This verse is about being a whole new person, which is demonstrated by a whole new set of practices and values that are noticeably different than those of the old person. Notice that it speaks in the past tense, it says **since you have** put off the old man **with his practices**. This isn't something that we're looking forward to happening, it's something that already has happened, and authenticates its reality. Without an external change in practices it would be impossible to perceive that any change ever took place in the inward constitution. It's the new practices that testify to the reality of the new man on the inside. Where there's no change in practices, there's no reason to conclude that there's been any change in the person. The Lord said that by their fruits, which means their actions and values, that his disciples would be known and recognized. The Lord also said that every good tree bears good fruit, which means every true Christian demonstrates a new set of practices and values. And He further said that any branch that doesn't demonstrate these characteristics would be cut off and thrown into the fire. Now, do with these verses as you will.

Verse 10:

10 and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator.

In this verse we see that yes it is past tense, but it isn't completed. It says this new man is still under construction. It says he's still being renewed in knowledge. This formerly old man is already new on the inside, but he's not fully mature, he's not fully knowledgeable, and therefore he's growing in his knowledge, and his experience with every passing day. This man has indeed been born-again in his spirit, but his mind must be renewed according to the knowledge of God. By this it means that this new man must learn the things about God that he never knew before. About His holiness, about His righteousness, about His sovereignty, and about His divine nature, so that we ourselves might be renewed and transformed in our thinking processes in accordance to the image and likeness of the One who created us.

Very simply put, it's that we have to acquire a true and accurate knowledge of God, and how He thinks, and what He likes, and what He dislikes, for us to be able to be renewed into that same image ourselves. This isn't talking about the spiritual portion of man as much as it's talking about our mental understanding. By His grace, and through His power, we were granted a new spirit, but then we're commanded, through the use of our minds, to get to know everything that we can about the Lord so that we can begin to bring our thinking into conformity to His, through the example of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, as taught in the holy Scriptures.

This verse, and other companion verses like Romans 8:29; 12:2, and Ephesians 4:13 are teaching us that the Lord intends to bring our thinking into conformity with His thinking through our acquisition of **knowledge about Him**. This is the predetermined process designed by God for the preparation of His children to take their place with Him in His eternal kingdom, but sadly this whole biblical concept seems to escape the majority of Christianity, who truly seem to believe that the only thing God's determined for His children is to make them all evangelists. The only way to make sense of this verse, and put it to any practical use, is to first understand that God has a divine purpose of His own for His elect. That purpose is that once they were redeemed they would begin to grow in the knowledge of God himself, and their thinking would be gradually and progressively renewed and transform according to the image of God himself, so that they would eventually be made suitable children for His eternal kingdom. Jesus is building his church, and God the father is preparing his kingdom, this is what's going on in this day and age. A failure to understand this leaves us ill-equipped to interpret these verses, and powerless to discern the whole purpose of our lives from the divine perspective.

And this is why the majority of the churches can't get past evangelism, because they don't really know how they got here, why they're here, or what it is they're supposed to be doing while they are here. So, just for the record, let me answer all these questions. How did we get here? Because we were chosen by God before the beginning of time and our names were recorded in His book of life. (Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4-5; 2Th 2:13; Rev 13:8, 17:8) Why are we here? Because it's here, on this earth, and under the present predetermined circumstances, that we're being progressively sanctified, transformed, renewed, and matured, to the point that we will be ready to stand by the side of our Lord Jesus Christ, having been transformed into His image. (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13) And this is also the answer to what we're supposed to be doing while we are here. We are here being daily renewed in the knowledge of God, **through the study of his Scriptures**, which renews our thinking and transforms us into that mature bride of Christ for which He will return, when she has sufficiently made herself ready. (Rev 19)

In Hebrews ch's 5 & 6 there's discussion about Christians who've made no progress in their faith and maturity, and are still in rudimentary debates over the elements of salvation, and have no understanding of the righteousness of God and His eternal purpose for their lives. The writer rebukes them for their failure, and urges them to move beyond these things to the meatier subjects of the plan and purpose of God. Perhaps we ourselves should pay much closer heed to these verses.

Verse 11:

11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Verse 11 starts out with the word "here," so we need to understand what he means. Does he mean they're in the city of Colossae? No, that's not what he's saying, he's not talking about a geographical place, but a spiritual place. The place he's speaking about is the place of that one new man. All of those who are in this place have put on the new man, and this new man is undergoing a renewal of his mind according to the knowledge of his Creator. This is a common experience of each and every believer. And this is the point of Paul's sentence here in verse 11. That here, in this place of the one new man, there is no longer a distinction about whether one is a Jew or a Greek, whether one is circumcised or uncircumcised; whether one is a barbarian a Scythian a slave or a free man, these carnal distinctions are rendered meaningless here in this one new spiritual man.

So, how have all distinctions of class, ethnicity, status, as well as wealth and power been nullified? He answers this question with the next few words. Because, in this one new man, Christ himself is all. In other words the only thing of significance, the only thing of importance in this one new man is that he is corporately being reviewed into the image of Christ himself. Therefore there are no carnal earthly distinctions. Christ is what the one new man is all about, nothing else matters, in fact nothing else even exists. This one new man is intended by God to be a mirror image of his son Jesus, which is accomplished through the gift of the new spirit and the renewing of the mind through the holy Scriptures.

You see, this one new man wasn't created for himself but for another. This one new man was conceived and predetermined by God to be the eternal mate for his son and an internal kingdom of children for himself. We've often heard preachers use the term "it's not about us it's all about him." This statement is absolutely true, and it applies to the existence of humanity. Humanity isn't about humanity, humanity is about serving the predetermined purpose planned by God. Also it isn't random, each and every one was predetermined and selected by name before time began.

And finally the last words of the sentence. After the declaration that Christ **is** all, the sentence goes on to say that he is **in** all. And it is by virtue of his being all, and His being in all that all other distinctions are rendered moot. This one new man is all about Christ, and is indwelt and conformed to Christ, because Christ is equally within all of the members. There isn't one Christ within one person, and then another Christ within another person; there isn't a big Christ within one and a little Christ in another, there is only one Christ, and he's the same one who indwells every member. When we understand this we can see that the earthly and carnal class distinctions with which we're so familiar here on this earth can hold no meaning whatsoever here in this spiritual place called the one you man. When the same Christ is all and is within all then there can be no distinctions of individuality in the carnal manner with which we're familiar.

But, so that we don't get the wrong idea, this doesn't mean that we all lose our sense of individuality. God so designed man that each and every one is a sentient and self-aware entity. Every human being created is aware that we share a common source of life, but at the same time, we are endowed with the capability to perceive our own uniqueness within this common life. And it's this capability of self-awareness, a sense of uniqueness, from which we derive our own individual purpose for life. While each of us wishes to be conformed to Christ our Lord, nevertheless we do still desire to have some sense of individual purpose. And God has intentionally designed us this way because it suits his eternal purpose to have a kingdom of worshipers who are more than simply clones or drones. In fact, it might be said that the whole purpose of time and space and tangible matter is that it serves God's purpose to prepare his children to take their place in his kingdom as these sentient and self-aware beings that he desires to be his worshipers. Time and creation are God's training ground, his boot camp if you will, built and designed specifically to prepare and train his final family of eternal worshipers. Which points us right back to the first verses in this study that opens with these words:

1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Col 3:1-4 (NASB)

Just as Christ, in his nature and essence is God, nevertheless he mysteriously maintains an individuality and personality that is unique to himself. In his nature and character and life he is exactly like his father, he even is one with his father. And in a very similar fashion, we as human beings, will be just like Christ in our nature and character and life, but yet we'll still maintain a sense of unique individuality. One life source, one mind set, and one heart attitude, all desiring the exact same things, but yet expressing those things from our own individual personalities.

This is what God has planned from the beginning, what He' doing right now, and what He will continue to do until it's completed. We very commonly hear people say "what's God doing in the world today?" The answer to that is that He's doing the same thing that He has been doing since the beginning of time. God hasn't changed His plan, He's not improvising as He goes. He's not playing it by ear so to speak. Neither is He sitting by and watching to see what will happen. The Scriptures clearly reveal that God himself had a very specific purpose for creating man. Ever since He scraped up a handful of dirt, breathed life into that dirt, and named that dirt Adam, He started doing what He had planned to do before He created the universe. From this handful of dirt, God would create an eternal everlasting family of worshipers for Himself, and that's exactly what He's doing. He didn't choose to make a finished product immediately. But like a potter, to mold and shape and work this little pile of dirt into an eventual vessel glory.

Every true Christian needs to know and understand what God's ultimate plan is for them. Our journey didn't end at our conversion. Our journey began at our conversion. And the end goal isn't to see how many more converts can be made, as so much of Christianity seems to believe. But rather what happens to those converts after they're converted. You see creation wasn't made simply as a means to get converts, but much more as a place and means by which to fashion, mature, and prepare those converts once they were converted.

Creation is both the place, and the means, whereby those who are chosen by God are brought to a full knowledge of God, and transformed in their thinking into His image, thereby making them suitable for their ultimate purpose of being His family and His worshipers.

Nevertheless, for the vast majority of what calls itself Christianity, the whole purpose of creation and everything, as they perceive it, is to see how many humans can be saved from eternal damnation. With little or no thought whatsoever of anything beyond this, or that God himself might just have a much higher purpose of His own for all these people that He's made. For the most part we don't even try to look past our own interests. One reason is that we're inherently selfish and self-centered. And another is we're generally lazy, and don't wish to pursue the Scriptures in a deep thoughtful fashion, but rather we prefer to skip and hop lightly across the top of them, intentionally avoiding any serious study and debate.

What we want is a short little thought-for-the-day, a light hearted emotional stimulus filled with love and compassion, but completely void of conviction, mortification of sin, deep self-examination, and serious intellectual pursuit into the heart and mind of God himself. Few of us seem to even want to know what God says and what He wants, but rather, what He's going to do for us today. From what I see, and those I encounter, the general thought seems to be that Christianity consists of how many little religious Post-it notes are on your refrigerator door, and how many of the popular books of the day you have on your bookshelf, and your careful observance of outward traditions in front of others.

But I see very little passion and hunger for the word of God itself. Little passion to dig deeply into it and examine it carefully and thoroughly because it's God's word from himself to us. Of course it's His instruction manual, but much more than that, it's His love letter to us, opening and revealing His own heart to us, if we care to know it. But alas, it seems that very few really want to know the heartfelt things of God, but only what God can do for them. And they call themselves Christians; maybe they are I don't know; but this I do know, that this is not the biblical description of a born-again Christian.

This certainly isn't the example of Christians that are depicted in the Bible. The Christians of the Bible made Christ their very life, and hungered for His word, and huge numbers forfeited their lives simply for His namesake. If the Christianity of today is in fact genuine Christianity, then it certainly is a very different Christianity than that depicted in the words of holy Scripture. To use modern terminology, it has morphed into something very, very different. Something very light and superficial, lacking any roots, and devoid of any real life-changing power. It's become something almost entirely emotional in its essence, and void of any intellectual aspects. It's soft, and sweet, and touchy-feely, tolerant of anything and critical of nothing. Making no judgments and setting no standards, accept that there are no standards. We have a new "don't ask, don't tell" Christianity just like secular society.

It's almost like the church realized that it was unsuccessful in its efforts to conform the thoughts and behaviors of the world, so it decided instead to change itself to match them. And for the most part that's exactly what we have today, a church doing its best to appeal to the world, to be a friend to the world. (Jas 4:4) And actually believes that by doing so it will transform the world to its way of thinking, or at least be able to maintain a friendly relationship with it. Anyone who wants to call himself a Christian today is free to do so, regardless of what they believe or how they behave.

And the Christianity of today is quick to accept them just as they are without any examination or expectations of righteousness. Without any minimum standards of belief and conformity to Scriptures. This is 21st century Christianity, and it boasts not in its righteousness, or even in the uniformity of its beliefs, but only in its number of baptisms. If what we see today is genuine Christianity, then the Lord needs to send some more Apostles to write a new, New Testament Gospel, because there's little or no resemblance whatsoever of this new Christianity to the description in the New Testament Gospel that we have. The Christianity described in the words of holy writ has all but vanished, or perhaps it's just obscured from view by the overwhelming abundance of this new revised version.

A great many people want to be seen as spiritual, and many want to be seen as religious, but it's near impossible to find one's who simply want to be holy, godly, and righteous, according to the description of the Scriptures. Oh, we all want to be thought of as "good people" and righteous, but we have our own definition of the term, and it certainly isn't the one found in the Scriptures. This new Christianity wants to be friends with everybody. It wants to avoid any conflicts or confrontations, and be thought of as loving and tolerant of all. This certainly sounds nice doesn't it?

Why would anybody object to such a church?

Well, because I'm sad to say, this just isn't the description of the church that Jesus Christ said He would build. Oh yes, Christ is loving and forgiving, but, at the same time He demands repentance, obedience, and righteousness from those on whom He bestows that love and forgiveness. He demands unquestioned submission to His authority, which is presented to us in the Scriptures. And the simple fact is that conflicts with the world are unavoidable, and it was meant to be that way. In response to His act of love on our behalf, He expects and demands a choice be made on our part as to Who and what gets our friendship and affections, because a bride cannot have two husbands, she must choose one and reject all the rest, as James says in his epistle:

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? James 4:4-5 (NASB)

Let me make an immediate clarification. When this verse speaks of friendship with the world, the context of the verse is talking about the attitudes and affections and behaviors that the world approves. Those very things that were just mentioned in verse five of our study. This verse isn't telling us that we can't have personal friends, it says we can't be friends with the old actions and habits and attitudes that the world approves. This should be clear enough from the verse, but I'm sure there are those who might draw wrong conclusions, so I want to clear this up right from the beginning. So, even though we are allowed to have friends in this world, we are never allowed to become friendly with the ways of the world. To do so makes us disobedient to our beloved and puts us at enmity with Him. So a choice is thrust upon us as to whom we serve, and whom we love, and whom we obey.

The Bible often mentions the jealousy of God over the affections and worship of His elect. Few things, if any, seem to arouse His anger as vehemently as idolatry. If there's a close second it would be flagrant disobedience and ingratitude. Jealousy is a word that most often applies to personal feelings and emotions. Oh yes, one might be jealous of another person's possessions or capabilities, but the vast majority of the times jealousy is speaking about heart matters, affection, love, and personal relationships. And it's in this context that the Bible speaks about the relationship between God and His elect. God's jealousy is never spoken of over the world, but only regarding those whom He has chosen to be His own.

Throughout the entire Bible the examples used when speaking about God and His elect are close personal examples. For instance a father and his children, or a man and his wife. The Bible doesn't use a general and his army as the relationship between God and man, but rather examples that are close and personal and passionate. And it's only these kind of relationships that are able to invoke jealousy when one party is unfaithful to the other. This verse that we just quoted in James chapter 4 says that God jealously desires that Spirit which dwells in His elect. Without argument the subject here is that unspoiled and undivided Spirit of love, appreciation, submission, and ultimately eternal worship.

Because, from God's point of view, this is the whole reason that He made human beings in the first place. And this is what He jealously seeks in His elect. And we can be certain of this, that nothing less will do, nothing less is acceptable to God to enter His kingdom. There will be no spiritual adultery in the kingdom of God. To gain entry into that eternal kingdom each and every individual must have finally and thoroughly resolved the issue of who is their first love, and who they wish to serve in total submission for the entire rest of eternity.

Just as a bride cannot maintain a romantic relationship with a former boyfriend, neither can a disciple of Jesus Christ maintain a friendly and romantic relationship with the world of the old man. We must put it off, sever all ties with it, lest we be guilty of spiritual adultery and prove ourselves to be an unfit mate. **The work of a bride isn't to see how many more wives she can find for her husband, it's to learn everything she can about how to be pleasing to Him herself.** Because He's already made that choice of a mate Himself.

Let me put this into a contemporary context. The very first and primary work of every one of Christ's followers is to apply themselves, through the diligent study of scriptures, to be conformed to the image of their creator. To grow in our knowledge of Him and our similarity of heart and mind to Him. This is what makes us a suitable mate for Him.

While each of us might be blessed with the occasional opportunity to share this great mystery through the presentation of the gospel, nevertheless, our first priority, our principal and primary calling, isn't to see how many more brides we can find for our groom, that's His decision, but rather to apply our maximum efforts at becoming that mature and suitable bride that He expects and requires us to be.

You see how simple and how right this whole concept is, but yet for many diverse reasons we still insist on making it difficult. Nonetheless, for those who truly are the called, the chosen, the elect; these know what their job is, these know what their passion is, and spend each day in diligent pursuit of this goal. These are the ones that have a burning passion for the word of God, not just little "thought for the day" notes. These are the ones who want to hear the Scriptures in clarity and detail, not just a cute little ear tickling homily, or emotional testimony. These are the ones who willingly obey the Scriptures, rather than endlessly question and debate the principles, looking for ways to avoid compliance.

Admittedly even amongst the churches, these are in the minority, even the extreme minority, but it's these whom the Bible calls Christians, children of God, the bride of Christ. All else are described in the Scriptures as being self deceived, because even though they confidently called themselves Christians, and took serious offense at any thoughts to the contrary, nevertheless they weren't willing to obey the word of God. (Mat 7:21-23) Their spiritual house, that was built on a foundation of sand, totally collapsed and was washed away when the storm of God's evaluation came to bear upon it. (Mat 7:24-27)

Conclusion:

So, the inescapable conclusion from these verses in Colossians chapter 3 is that the new man is new because he's different. Very different, night and day different. For example, one can buy a new car that's exactly like his old car. It's new but it's not any different. That's not the kind of new that the Scriptures are speaking about here. The kind of new being spoken of here is new in heart and mind, in affections and desires, and in actions and behaviors.

We're commanded by the Scriptures to openly demonstrate this renewal before mankind as a testimony to the power and glory of God. There is absolutely no credible argument to support any assertions that Christians might continue to behave, believe, approve, or condone the popular ways of the secular world.

If we are genuine, then we will both desire and do those things that we're commanded in His scriptures. If you love Me then you'll keep my commandments said Jesus. (Jn 14:15) Obedience is the biblical measurement of authentic love. Biblically speaking, there is no such thing as loving disobedience to the commandments of God. Either we love His commandments, and joyfully do them, or, we don't really love Him at all.

Oh we might really love a fictitious god that we've fabricated in our carnal mind's, this is commonplace, but a love for the true and living God will, without fail, also entail a love for His righteousness and His commandments through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. He and His word are one and the same, you cannot love Him and hold His word in disregard at the same time. Genuine love produces actual obedience, by putting away those things of the old man, because that man died with Christ on that cross, and a whole new man has risen from the dead, different in every way, by the power that Jesus Christ has to give life to whomever He chooses. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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