

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Practical Guide to Living Out The Law of Christ, Pt 4

Selected Passages

Keywords: The Law of Christ, Holiness, Obedience, Love, Sanctification

PowerPoint Presentation included: A Practical Guide to Living Out The Law of Christ
powerpoint.pdf

SermonAudio Blurb: Having resolved that the bible teaches that the New Testament believer is not under the Law of Moses, but rather, the Law of Christ, the question is then raised, “What does this look like in one’s life?” This series seeks to help bring out the various facets related to holiness, sanctification and godliness in the life of a believer. In this message we note how the obeying of the Law of Christ is much more than stop committing a sin. To use Paul’s terminology, we don’t merely put off sin, but put on good works.

I. Introduction.

- A. We continue with this series on a practical outworking of the Law of Christ.
- B. So far we saw that until we grasp and love the realities connected to having believed the gospel of Jesus Christ, the commands will not always make sense. This is the indicative/imperative motif.
- C. Last week I began to show you the second principle which simply says that because we are saved by God’s grace and live by God’s grace, the commands we are given are actually to a higher standard.
- D. Today I will show you a third point: The New Testament uses a type of imagery that pictures one stripping off sin to describe the lifestyle of a Christian and putting on godliness.
 - 1. So picture filthy clothing and think of sin and wrong actions or thinking. There is a need to strip these away. But this is only half of the equation.
 - a. This is like when you stop sinning in a specific way.
 - b. But this really only brings you to a neutral state of living.
 - 2. The New Testament then will describe what you are to put on by way of attitude and actions. This is likened to putting on of appropriate clothes.
 - 3. The Apostle Paul most commonly uses this sort of language. And in doing so we find that he pushes the believer to excel more and higher than merely the cessation of a sin.
 - 4. Today we will see several commands given to us that show us what a life under the Law of Christ looks like.

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E. Ephesians 4:20-32.

1. We see in this passage the necessity of holiness for a genuine Christian and Paul illustrates this by giving five practical examples of obedience to the Law of Christ.
2. Five ways the Law of Christ points us beyond merely ceasing of sinful activities and into living out the truth of our identity in Jesus Christ.

II. A Practical Guide to Living Out The Law of Christ.

A. Background (4:1, 17-19).

1. Note how 3:20-21 speaks of the abundant grace that God is able to pour upon us as we live out our faith in Christ.
2. That reality leads to the “therefore” of vs 1. Walk/live/conduct yourselves in a manner that fits your claim of being a Christian.
3. And so, unsurprisingly, in vs 17 we see that what is not optional is to continue to live a life that is more consistent with your former life as a non-Christian.
4. Four realities of our former life apart of Jesus Christ:
 - a. First is futile, hopeless thinking (17b).
 - b. Second is our understanding was darkened (18a).
 - c. Third is that we were excluded, kept from the life of God for our hearts were hard toward God (18b)
 - d. Fourth is that we were given over to sin and rebellion of one sort or another (19).

B. Our new position and identity in Jesus Christ (20-24).

1. We did not learn Christ “this way” (20).
 - a. In other words, if you heard a supposed gospel that told you that to follow Jesus means nothing changes then you did not learn of Jesus Christ. You learned and believed a false gospel.
 - b. In other words, it is contradictory to walk in darkness while claiming to believe the truths of the gospel.
2. What is the truth bound up in the good news? Vs 22 begins to lay this out and Paul immediately begins to use this “put on/put off” language.

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- a. First, that we must be actively and consistently stripping off the old man [self] (22).
 - (1) And this is where the spiritual battle is really at. It is understanding that the rulers of this age cannot touch Jesus.
 - (2) And it is right there that the enemy presses in on us. These rulers and powers of darkness tempt and try us. They market this age and the life and passions of this age as a better option.
 - (3) And we must constantly resist. But HOW??? The answer is in vs 24.
 - b. Second, that we are to daily putting on the reality of who we are in Jesus (24).
- C. So in light of our new identity in Jesus Christ Paul gives us five examples of obedience to the Law of Christ. And in each of these notice that it is not enough to stop doing something. The Christian **cannot be content with merely the absence of wrong.**
- 1. We are to be people who speak truth (25).
 - a. Lying is an excellent description of what defines this age. The whole thing is a lie on a cosmic level.
 - b. Instead we are to be speaking truth to each other. None of you are exempt from this. We need to remember that Jesus is the victorious Lord.
 - c. To stop lying is all fine and good. But even the unbeliever can do that. But to be a person who loves truth and speaks it is one who is modeling obedience to his Lord.
 - 2. We are to be people who reconcile (26-27).

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- a. Notice the warning in vs 27. That is at the core of this command. Satan loves to work his evil through emotions and emotional living.
- b. Key observation—the positive command is to be angry and then it is qualified by the second command which is a negative—do not sin.
 - (1) Be angry, but do not sin in the process. It is really that simple. There will be times you must be angry, but this is not an excuse to sin.
 - (2) In fact, it is very possible that you sin if you do not become angry at times.
- c. This means you are not losing control and letting anger now control the situation.
- d. So when might we need to be angry? I believe a simple manner to approach this is to consider God. It is an attribute of God—He is love, he is gracious, he is kind and forgiving, he is slow to anger, but he does become angry.
- e. But we do not let the sun go down on that anger. This is the part where you put on reconciliation or resolution.
 - (1) If you are going to be angry you need to ask yourself if you can rightly act upon that anger in the proper manner and time frame. Which, again shows that this is a controlled anger.
 - (2) So seek to be reconciled. Sometimes this can't happen because the other person refuses.
 - (3) But, then, seek resolution. "Look, you can disagree that what happened was wrong. But I believe it is and I want you to think about this." "You can try to defend this action all you wish, but it is simply not acceptable and here are the consequences."
- f. And when dealing with emotional issues like anger, vs 27 must be always remembered. Satan will use your emotions to create disunity, distrust, and point you to sinful options.

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- g. But it is hard for him to do so when you are one promoting peace and grace.
- 3. We are to be generous people (28).
 - a. Notice the progression of putting on that Paul gives. This is a process that will take time.
 - b. Step one: Get a job and make sure that the work is honorable.
 - c. Step two: begin to share it with those in need.
 - d. This is what repentance looks like for a thief.
- 4. We are to be a people who speak grace not evil (29).
 - a. The point is that whatever it is speaking about that thing has gone bad. Or, more importantly, that thing no longer serves its true purpose.
 - b. It is speech that does not help bring about its intended result. Perhaps you try to calm a situation down but only create more outrage because your words were unwise.
 - c. Instead we put on speech that brings grace to those who hear.
 - (1) The obvious thought here will be words that give praise and are kind and gentle. Words that reflect patience and goodness.
 - (2) But these are already self-evident. But they also do not reflect the full spectrum of what needs to be said in a fallen world.
 - (3) There is a time to rebuke. There is a time to confront. There is a time to resist. There is a time to clarify.

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- d. So this one needs to be used with care, much like all of them. Try to not codify speech but let it be defined and driven with the goal of giving grace.
- 5. Finally, we should reflect the fruits of the Spirit rather than the spirit of this age (30-32).
 - a. How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? This is not some mystical event where we don't listen to a prophetic voice or seek certain experiences like speaking in tongues.
 - b. It is explicated by vss 31-32.

III. Conclusion.

- A. It is not uncommon for parents and spouse to model a life of “not doing.” But we are called to something much higher and much better.
- B. The world of “not doing” is born out of a age under the power of sin.
 - 1. Remember the Garden. Before sin Adam and Eve were naked. But there was no shame, no self-centered self-awareness.
 - 2. But once sin entered into the picture, then a whole host of things we should not do came into existence.
- C. If you take this principle of putting off and putting on into your bible study you will find it of great value. But it will be of even greater value if you can see that there is the principle of loving God and neighbor behind the commands.
- D. The gospel points us to the day when all things are made new. When sin and death are cast away into the lake of fire forevermore. Where “not doing” is gone, for all things become good and right.
- E. And this is what you and I are to model now. To not participate in the deeds of darkness found in this age. But to participate in the deeds fitting the kingdom to come.
- F. But how can we do this well and consistently. That is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And that is what we will look at next, Lord willing.

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. May you rest in the power of the Holy Spirit and may you rejoice in the love of the Father as it flows to you in every moment and in every way. Amen.