

(Colossians) 11 How the Spirit-Filled Life Works Out in Daily Life

by Bob Utley

The Spirit-filled life is a visible reversal of the fall, where Christians treat each other radically different from the expectations of their culture, and it impacts every area of the believer.

Duration: 30:51

Topics: "Colossians"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living differently in our relationships as Christians. He refers to the book of Philemon, where the radical nature of interpersonal relationships in the church is addressed. The speaker suggests that there should be a distinctive difference between Christian men and women in a Christ-like marriage, where selflessness and commitment to Christ are prioritized. He also highlights the need for observable differences between Christians and the secular culture, emphasizing the power of a long-lasting, happy marriage as a witness to the world.

Transcript

Well, I hope you'll turn your Bibles to Colossians 3, verse 18. I think there's some exciting truths here, and there's some things to struggle with here, so I hope you will think with me and follow with me. This is often called one of the places where Paul gives a list of domestic examples.

We have talked about how Colossians and Ephesians are parallel books, and Colossians is the first of those books written to combat Gnostic false teachers and their exploitive influence on the congregations in the Lycus River Valley. And we've talked about how these teachers were sexually exploitive, how they were damaging not only the church, but the families in the church. So Paul writes to give guidance on how to handle these false teachers.

And then knowing that this heresy would spread, sometime soon after he wrote Colossians, he wrote Ephesians. Now, the reason I bring that up is this section is much more expansive in Ephesians 5.18, really 5.15, through 6.9, where Paul introduces this same material by the very famous passage on ever be filled with the Spirit. We call this the Spirit-filled life.

Now, in Colossians 3.16, last week I mentioned to you that the parallel phrase in Colossians does not say ever be filled with the Spirit, but says, let the word of Christ richly dwell in you. Now, they are exactly

parallel. So today, this is how do we let the word of Christ dwell in us.

Practically, how does this impact our daily lives? Now, I think it's got to do more than just Sunday. I think the Spirit-filled life is more than a certain kind of worship experience. I think the Spirit-filled life has to impact every area of the believer because what the Spirit-filled life is is a visible reversal of the fall of Genesis 3. Genesis 3, man turns away from dependence on God and seeks independence.

And that independence expressed itself in an extreme narcissistic selfishness. Now, when we become new creatures in Christ, something radical happens and it happens to mind, body, and spirit. And it happens in a total area of transformation.

Something really, really new has come. And it impacts who we are, how we live, how we speak, and every area of our life. So Paul picks one example of this radically new agenda, this radically new selflessness, indirect contradistinction to selfishness.

And the example he gives is the Christian home. Now, chapter 3, 18 should run, the paragraph should run through chapter 4, verse 1 because we're dealing with the domestic example. How does the new creation affect home? How does it affect parents? How does it affect parent-child? How does it affect slave owners and slave masters, the slaves who work in the home? So this is a unified topic.

Now, I started to pray when I got up here. Lord, what's of me protect them from and what's of you accentuate in their heart and mind? Because the problem is I don't know the difference anymore. And here is my problem.

As a hermeneutics, Bible interpretation focused minister, I must somehow differentiate two problematic areas. Number one, am I committed to first century culture or am I committed to the truth of God, the eternal truth of God, first given to a first century culture? Now, you say, is there a difference? Oh, my soul, are we trying to reproduce a first century culture to be in the will of God? You say, well, does this make a difference? Oh, it's a huge difference. How much of Scripture is culturally conditioned? I feel very, very uncomfortable even discussing this topic, but I am forced into this topic in text like this.

And I'm forced into it for several reasons. Is this discussion of the family, God's will, for every church, in every society, in every age? Now, before you answer that too quickly, two illustrations I want to mention. Number one, when I struggled, and it is a struggle trying to interpret 1 Corinthians, when I struggled with 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul seems to say that celibacy is a preferred spiritual state.

Now, I've got to ask myself, Paul is pretty clear about that. Does that mean that God's will for my life is that if I really love Jesus, I should never marry and have far more time to give to ministry? Now, I think you realize that there are some groups who have picked up on that option, and their clergy do not marry. Or do I go back and look at the Old Testament commands, the only command we ever kept, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth? Now, I have a direct contradiction here, and I don't know quite what to do.

Does Paul saying this in one chapter in 1 Corinthians make it God's will for every human in every culture and every age? The other thing that I remember so clearly about this, I have a wonderful colleague at East Texas Baptist University, a professor of social political science from India. His name is Israel Nandimbudi. And he grew up in Israel, and his marriage was arranged.

His family arranged his marriage with a Christian lady. And he told me one time, and it just so penetrated to me, he said, in America, you find somebody you love and you marry. But in India, our parents find

somebody for us, and we learn to love them.

Now, you see, we're so culturally conditioned that the first time we hear that we go, I don't want nobody choosing my woman. Now, wait a minute. Those parents loved him.

Those parents found a woman who was also a Christian, also from a family, and they have a wonderful marriage. Is our way of doing it in America the only way to do it? I certainly do not agree. Now, you do realize that first century, at least in Jewish, and in some point Greco-Roman, the parents are far more like the Indian model than like the American model.

Now, how much of first century Greco-Roman or Palestinian Jewish culture do you make mandatory for your understanding of Scripture? No, no, no, what we do is we come with what we're used to and read it in to every text in the Bible. It is so hard on some of these issues to know the will of God when you respect Scripture. Now, Paul's going to talk about slaves.

He says nothing negative about slavery. Does not condemn slavery. Does that mean slavery is the will of God? I certainly don't believe that.

This is written to a patriarchal culture. Is patriarchal culture the will of God for every human society? That is the answer I'm not sure I can make. And it's not because I don't respect Scripture.

It's because I know that Scripture is wider than first century culture. As I look at Genesis 1 through 3, which I think is the picture frame around all the rest of the Bible. If you don't look at Genesis 1 through 3, the rest does not make sense.

There is a wonderful mutuality between the sexes in Genesis 1 and 2. An absolute equality there. In the fall, part of the fall, go to 1 Timothy 2 or you go to Genesis 3, Eve instigates the problem. There is a consequent to the problem.

Now, this is my question. Does the consequence of the problem remain throughout life or does redemption mitigate the consequences of the fall? I guess what I'm saying is, is there a difference in the Christian home because of the indwelling Christ that does something to the relationship between husbands and wives? By the way, this is not about men and women. Should I scream and beat the pulpit? This has nothing to do with the issue between men and women and what they should or should not do in our society.

This has to do with the relationship of a Spirit-filled Christian home. You hear me? Because there's certainly equality in redemption, whether we go to Galatians 3 or Colossians 3 or several other places in Scripture where it's mentioned. Now, this equality, how does it work out? Now, this is what I'm... I guess the truth is I refuse to be dogmatic about how it works out because I have met couples in my 40 years of pastoring where the wife is the dominant one.

And I've met couples where the man is the dominant one. And I've met couples where they're both duds. Now, am I supposed to, as a Christian counselor, inject a particular patriarchal model on every couple no matter their personality type or the culture they come from? Am I, as a Christian missionary, to go anywhere in the world and suddenly change their culture into a patriarchal system because thus saith the Lord? That is what I cannot answer.

But I really struggle with it. I guess it comes home to me most clearly in the issue of homosexuality. And in many ways, I do not know exactly how to deal with that either.

The person who's given me a handle on this is Garden Fee in his book, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* and *Gospel and Spirit* where he struggles with the women's issue and the Holy Spirit issue. And basically, he tries to give some guidelines on how do we tell the kernel of truth from the husk, the cultural husk from the eternal truth of the Word of God because there is husk in the Bible. I'm sorry, there's husk in the Bible.

There's Old Testament husk. There's New Testament husk. I desperately want to do the will of God.

I do not want to be overly influenced by American 21st century culture and I do not want to be unduly influenced by 1st century Greco-Roman-Palestinian culture. I want to be influenced by the Word of God. So how do I know a difference? Garden Fee made this point that has stuck with me.

It's not a biblical point. It's not something I'm ready to die for, but it is something that's really helped me in this area. And his point is this.

If the Bible has a uniform message on a subject, it is probably an eternal truth, period. If the Bible seems to speak with two voices on a subject, there's probably a cultural aspect. Now, when it comes to slavery, the Bible is neutral.

It's appalling injustice that was done in America by racial bigots in the South for a hundred years, proof texting text out of the Bible that were never the intent of the original author. Can I get an amen from a Southern church? But the Bible is uniform on its condemnation of homosexuality. Because I live in a culture of tolerance doesn't mean I can change the Word of God.

So what does it mean when I come to this particular text? Let me back up one step away from this terrible cultural fight and say this. Not only is the historical setting important to me as a Bible interpreter, but context is important to me. So as I come to this, am I spending too much time wrassling over the exact model between Christian men and women in marriage? And should I pull back and say, what is the overall one truth purpose of this Galatian 3 text? And it seems to be this.

Seems to be this to me. Something brand new, spiritually radical has happened to you, pagan. You have been indwelt with the Holy Spirit because you've been drawn by God to His Son.

You trusted His Son. You have been filled with the Spirit. You have been baptized into the body.

You are now a totally different creature. Now let's see it, model it. Let's look at how it changes your relationships.

Because what's radically different in this text is that Christians treat each other radically different from the expectations of whatever culture they're in. I'm a little nervous as a conservative Christian to turn these texts into a woman depreciating Islamic determinism. Christianity is not Islam.

Women have a dignity, an honor, and a helpmate quality in the church. They do not have in the mosque. Now, for redemptive purposes, are there guidelines to the man and guidelines to the woman? Yes, there are.

And what seems so negative to modern, post-modern America with all of their tolerance is that Paul still seems to be negative when he says to a woman, be submissive. Well, as a theologian, I must admit to you that this term, which is a military term for a chain of command, is used of Jesus Christ Himself being submissive to the Father. Now I ask you, is Jesus Christ in any sense less God than God the Father? Is there any sense in which Jesus is not equal and not full part of deity, the Godhead? But in time, did not the Son take a submissive role to accomplish the redemptive purposes of the triune God? Did He not, according to John, submit, yield, seek the Father's will, speak the Father's words, act the Father's acts when He was here? Does that make Jesus any negative in your mind? Then why would asking a woman to be submissive be a negative? Because it looks like what these domestic guidelines are doing is saying, and what Paul did, he spoke to the three people who have total authority in that culture.

Husbands, parents, slave owners. And he has a radical word for them. He also speaks to the three people who have no power in that culture.

Wives, children, and slaves. And he says to them, act so differently in your relationship that the world will know that something has happened to you. You do realize, chapter 4, verse 9, that Tychicus, who is bringing this letter to Colossae, is accompanied by a slave named Onesimus who Paul is sending back to his slave owner named Philemon.

And the most radical, how do we do interpersonal relationships in the church is dealt with in the little one chapter book of Philemon where being a slave owner and being a slave has a totally different standing because the redemption of both the slave owner and the slave. And I submit to you there ought to be that kind of distinctive between a Christian man and a Christian woman in a Christ-like marriage. And the purpose is not what do I want, what do I get to do, what do I have free of... The purpose is the world is watching.

And it may be in our day that the most powerful evangelical witness to a lost, fractured, broken, searching world is a 40-year happy marriage in Jesus Christ. It's men and women who treat themselves with honor, respect, and dignity, who don't push their own rights. It's a selfless model.

It's a laying down your rights for a purposeful spiritual goal. It has nothing to do with inequality, but it does have to do with commitment to Christ that radically, permanently, observably changes every relationship in life. And the reason the church is powerless today is there is no observable difference between us and a pagan lost American culture.

So don't give me a bunch of rules on how I'm supposed to or not supposed to treat my wife. Get your bony finger off my marriage. But pray that I'll be a Christ-like lover and a Christ-like giver and a Christ-like liver and a Christ-like mutual submitter.

Yes, I want to be the spiritual leader in my home, but I'm not always sure who's the great Christian in my home. I'm not always sure who has the best spiritual ideas. But I'm sure of this, that Peggy and I want to model the radical change that knowing Jesus brings.

And whatever that takes in the culture I find myself in... Now, if I was in some other culture, it may manifest itself in a different way. There is a cultural aspect to some of this. If I lived in a totally different place where marriage was done a totally different way, that's not the issue how you do marriage as far as who... How do you find your spouse and how long is the engagement and how old do you have to be? See, that's not the issue.

However, I find that person in Christ that I choose to live with in Jesus' name, I need to live with that person in a quality, permanent, loving, giving, selfless relationship because the word of God dwells richly in my mind and heart. Everything has the potential for great commission evangelism when you see it in light of the purpose of changed Christians to the culture they find themselves in. I wish I knew exactly.

Sometimes it's just the Bible. I wish I had a systematic theology book from God. I wish I had the truth and here's how to do it.

I would do it. I would do it. But I have a book that tells about relationships and how these relationships impacted a certain particular culture at a certain particular time.

And everything in that revelation is not eternal. But some things surely are. It is very hard for me as someone who loves the Bible to depreciate any text.

But the problem is what Americans do is read the Bible through 21st century, really 20th century, Baptist glasses for us. Southern, white, conservative glasses. We read these texts and read them right into our situation, right into our culture and never struggle with the issues.

And then proof text them and judge everybody else who doesn't see it just like we do. There is some confusion here. I'd like to make one more point if I could.

I'm not going to go through this exactly point by point. But knowing where it says, look at verse 24 with me. Well, 23.

Whatever you do, do your work heartily. This is talking about slaves right here. As for the Lord rather than for men.

I'm not sure what kind of a marriage you're in. But marriage is a gift of God that's going to pass away in time. You know that.

Marriage is not eternal. Sorry, Mormons. Marriage is a this age event.

Marriage is for the purpose of procreation and fellowship and stability of society. And whether we're talking about marriage or if we could bring an application truth from slaves and make it profession, that's not what the original intent is, but that's probably the modern application. Whatever I do, whether it's love Peggy, treat my kids with respect and discipline, or do a fair, honest job as someone in who the word of Christ dwells richly, I do it all for Him and not for me.

The key is the total observable reversal of the fall in the interpersonal relationships in the life of the mature Christian. We don't all do it the same. We don't all see it the same.

But how we treat each other ought to be the same. And the problem is we confuse our American individual freedoms with the corporate submission of Scripture. I've said it to you before, whether it's marriage or worship or work, whatever we do, we do for the growth, health of the body of Christ.

Now, if I sweep a floor, I do it as unto Him. If I'm a policeman, I do it as unto Him. If I'm a housewife, I do it as unto Him.

If I'm a corporate, I do it as unto Him. The goal is that there is an observable, non-me-focused life. Empowered by the indwelling Spirit that draws and attracts a confused, lost, selfish world to the beautiful

change that Jesus Christ can make in any and every life that trusts Him by faith and repentance.

And that the mutuality of Genesis 1 and 2 will return for sure in the future. But for my theology, the mutuality returns in redemption. It's easy, Lord, to hear sermons.

It's hard to live sermons. It's easy to talk about text. It's hard to walk in text.

It's easy to have theological discussions. It's hard to live Christ-like lives. I do pray for us that in every area that people will know that we've been with you and people will know that we're different from whatever culture we happen to be in.

That something radical has happened to our heart and mind. That we have a new mind and a new heart. That we have an indwelling Spirit.

That the Word of God dwells in us. And that this Christ-likeness, this non-likeness to the world will become an avenue and channel like a light to a moth to those who may not know you. Who are confused by the culture in which they find themselves.

Who are searching for more in life. We pray that the godly examples and godly living of the church of Jesus Christ in our day will be so bright, so powerful, so overwhelming that the world will come to you. Forgive us when we compartmentalize Christianity to a building or a day or a place or a certain event.

Loose us, we pray, on a world that needs to see a model of daily, sacrificial, death-to-self Christ-likeness at the store and at the school and at the office and across the backyard fence. Help us, we pray. Forgive us, we pray.

Energize us, we pray, that the world may know that you are Lord. Amen. I think I've given you more to think than to decide in an invitation.

But we are committed to an invitation because we believe the Word of God has power. It's been amazing to me through the years when I preach on things like this and people trust Christ. You're going, how did they get that? The Holy Spirit.

So I don't know why you're here or what you've heard me say exactly, but I hope you'll hear that still small voice of the God that made you speaking to you and drawing you to Himself. He may be drawing you to Himself in the way you treat your spouse. He may be drawing you to Himself in the way you interact with your children.

He may be drawing you to Himself in the way you treat others, in the way you do who you are in vocation. I do not know how God, but we've all been praying that He would speak. We belong to Him and we're trying to listen.

I trust that the Spirit in you and the Spirit in the book and the Spirit in me will let you respond in any way that the Lord has spoken to your heart.

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