

## Col 2:16-23

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. 18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

## Col 2:10

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

The word “complete” is a nautical term meaning that we are fully equipped and ready to sail.

- Paul warns us of three dangers.
- legalism,
- mysticism
- asceticism.

The bible warns 30 times or so to “beware.” In the OT it says,

Paul opens this section of Colossians by exposing the legalism of the Gnostics who were attempting to reintroduce the OT dietary laws found in Lev 11.

When it came to the NT Jesus did not make a big deal over food.

## Mk 7:18,

18 Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach and is eliminated,

## Peter’s Vision of Acts 10:

To the Corinthians Paul said, “food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.

Matt 15:11, it’s not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

In Rome seemed to be “strong” while others were labeled as “weak.”

So there was some conflict with those who had a weak conscience.

Paul took some of those matters up in his letter to the Galatians

- and to the Colossians as well.

He warned the Galatians 5:1 to “Stand fast in the liberty which Christ made them free, and he said, don’t be entangled again with the yoke of bondage”

In Colosse, the Gnostics taught that the believers should worship angels and deny self.

In verse 16 of Colossians Paul says that the legalistic system didn’t only involve diet, it also involved days.

This goes back to the laws given through Moses.

- The Jews were commanded in the OT
- to keep the Sabbath weekly
- which was the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week Exo 20:9-11.

Nine of the ten commandments are repeated in the NT,

The one commandment not repeated is the Sabbath law,

Therefore, we shouldn’t call it the Sabbath

- because it’s not designated in the NT. It’s the Lord’s day, Rev 1:10.

It was the first day of the week that the disciples gathered

- to break bread in Acts 20:7 and in 1 Cor 16:2.

It’s also the first day that commemorates

- the resurrection in John 20:1, 19, 26.

So Paul said, let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

The Gnostics at Colosse wanted to setup

- a religious calendar for the church,
- days which they deemed holy.

Paul says let no one judge you (take you to task).

And we shouldn’t be brought into bondage by those

- who celebrate certain days,

Paul showed a surprising measure of tolerance when writing to the Romans.

Rom 14:5-6

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

Paul is stating that such reverence for this day or that day is not that important.

With that said, he says not to let anyone judge you about the sabbath.

God gave Israel the Sabbath law at Sinai in Neh 9

- and made it a sign between Him and the nation.

Sabbath simply means rest.

Ultimately, we are not saved from sin by faith in Christ plus keeping the Sabbath.

- It's thru our faith in Christ alone.

Legalism produces a shallow faith.

- It's so busy pointing fingers that
- it neglects mercy and compassion.

Matt 23:23

23 ~~Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,~~ hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Paul points out the weakness of legalism by saying, all of these things, food and drink, festivals, new moons or sabbaths

Col 2:17

17 ~~which~~ are a shadow of things to come, (the old covenant was likened unto a shadow, but when Jesus came He became the substance, He's the real thing)

but the substance is of Christ.

Judaism was a religion of shadows. And the substance of those shadows is Christ.

Paul said in Philippians:

Phil 3:13

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

**Peter said when speaking of the day of the Lord:**

2 Peter 3:14

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

**Legalists add to Christianity thus becoming judgmental. But Jesus said, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged;”**

**When Jesus said, “Judge not” he was speaking of a critical person**

- looking for faults in others
- for not meeting your standards,
- your manmade rules.

So, be careful with legalism.

**Now in verses 18 & 19 we see two problems with false mysticism.**

- The first is that it promotes self
- and secondly it demotes Christ.

Col 2:18

18 Let no one cheat (defraud or deprive) you of your reward,

**BTW, this is an athletic term meaning,**

- don't let anyone act as an umpire against you
- for not keeping all of the rules.

**Paul is saying, don't let anyone take your spiritual prize away**

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Paul was addressing something that many of us in here are familiar with, mystic activity.

**This was the person who thought he could have an immediate experience**

- with the spiritual world,
- completely apart from the word of God
- and from the Holy Spirit.

**Paul spoke of such people to the Corinthians.**

2 Cor 11:13-15

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform

themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

**Those were some of the people in the church with the attitude of:**

- “hey, I’ve experienced something you need to experience,
- so let me help you experience the same.”

I don’t want to base my faith in someone’s dreams or in their visions.

**Can God reveal Himself thru dreams and visions, yes!**

- But I’m not going to base my faith
- on someone’s dreams or visions.

**It’s a terrible thing when someone has the attitude,**

- “I’ll believe if God shows me a miracle,
- or I’ll believe if God does this or that for me.”

Listen, acknowledging God is foundational to learning more about Him.

Heb 11:6

6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

**The opposite can be true as well.**

- God can do something in a person’s life,
- and they still won’t believe.

Pharaoh is a good example.

**Paul goes on to say these people had a false humility about them.**

- They had the attitude that they couldn’t go
- directly before God on their own,
- therefore, they go thru the angels.
- This is idolatry.

**Isaiah wrote:**

Isa 6:1

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Isa 6:4-5

4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 So I said:

"Woe is me, for I am undone!  
 Because I am a man of unclean lips,  
 And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;  
 For my eyes have seen the King,  
 The Lord of hosts."

Or what about Peter's response after he and others had been fishing all night and the Lord told him to cast his net and he caught a great number of fish, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

**Job had an encounter with the Lord:**

Job 42:5-6

5 I had only heard about you before,  
 but now I have seen you with my own eyes.

6 I take back everything I said,  
 and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

**Then there was John in Revelation,**

Rev 1:17

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

Col 2:19

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 ~~and~~ not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

**The New Living reads:**

Col 2:19

19 and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

If we stay connected to Christ, we will survive. He is the head of the church.

So beware of those who would promote self and demote Christ.

Col 2:20-23

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Finally we've come to our third warning in the last 4 verses. And that is, to be watching for asceticism.

Asceticism and legalism are partners in humanistic religion.

According to Merriam Websters, asceticism is practicing strict self-denial as a measure of personal and especially spiritual discipline<sup>1</sup>

It's saying, my body is evil

- therefore I'm going to punish it,
- I'm going to afflict it.

Paul said earlier in the chapter

Col 2:13-14

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

The ascetic person is much like the legalistic person

- His life is wrapped up in rules.

3 things about asceticism

- First in verse 20 is ignorance.

It was ignorance of the truth that they died with Christ,

- they were buried with Christ and were risen with Christ,
- therefore, they're not subject to these regulations.

Secondly, notice the description in verse 21.

- It's, touch not, taste not, handle not.

Notice the negative side of this.

- They judge themselves as spiritual because of
- what they don't do rather than what they do.

Thirdly is it's weakness:

In verses 22 & 23 it's a man-made teaching. He makes it clear in verse 22 when he says, according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. (2003) *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

**It's also weak because it's hypocritical verse 23.**

**Col 2:23**

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body (it's a phony religion and looks so spiritual, but God looks at the heart),

**Matt 6:16-18**

16 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

**Finally, asceticism is powerless to overcome the sin nature:**

but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.