

Winning the battle over the flesh

The works of the flesh..

- **Galatians 5** - sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.
- **Colossians 3** - passion, evil desire, covetousness, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, and telling lies.
- **Ephesians 4** - theft, bitterness, clamor, crude joking.
- **Philippians 2** - grumbling and disputing.
- **James 2** - favoring people who are of high status.
- **1st John 3** - acting unloving to other people.
- **1st Timothy 6** - greed.

How do I win the battle over the flesh? In Colossians 2:20-23, Paul tell us where not to look.

CHRISTIANS HAVE NO NEED TO LOOK TO THE WORLD TO FIND VICTORY OVER SIN.

The Word of God gives us 3 reasons from Col. 2 for why Christians have no need to look to the world to find victory over sin.

Reason #1 - The world's religious answers have no bearing on a Christian. **2:20; 22**

[20] If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— [22] —according to human precepts and teachings?

If you are trying to win the battle over your sinful flesh, the world will offer you answers that are not of God, but rather, they are human precepts - human commandments.

Colossians 2:12 explained already that Christians were buried with Christ - identified with Him - and we, through faith in Christ, have been raised to a new life. Our life is no longer subject to the world. A Christian is considered by God to be dead to the standards, philosophies, and regulations of the world, so he doesn't have to submit to things invented by men that God never commanded him to submit to.

Reason #2 - The world's religious answers ignore what really matters to God. **2:21-22; Gen. 3:1-3; Matthew 15:1-20**

[21] “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” [22] (referring to things that all perish as they are used)

Paul is likely referring to a combination of Judaistic legalism and gnostic influenced asceticism.

Man has a way of twisting things and missing the point. Man think he is not bad, but rather, the food is bad, the fun is bad, the enjoyment is bad, and so on. Man often fails to examine his own heart. He fails to understand that he is the problem. He is bad.

Jesus set the record straight (Matt. 15): It's not the food that is inherently evil. It's the human heart that is evil. Food goes into the body and perishes. Food does not affect your soul. It's merely physical. That is why Paul said these human regulations are all referring to things that perish with the using. No amount of starving your body will make your heart clean.

God is not interested in what goes into your stomach, as much He is concerned about what comes out of your heart.

Reason #3 - The world's religious answers don't solve the problem of the sinful human heart. **2:23**

[23] These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Physical bodily discipline is not the secret to winning the battle over the sin of your heart. A clean, pure, and righteous heart does not come from a physical discipline. It has to be from somewhere else.

Paul gave us 3 ways these worldly religious answers appear wise,

1. The world's answers appear wise in worship - promoting self-made religion. That word means arbitrary worship. Arbitrary means there's no reason for it. God never commanded it of you. You just made it up - so really it's no worship of God.

2. The world's answers appear wise in humility. The text says asceticism - showcasing your humility. It's a false humility. You don't become right with God, you don't become more spiritual, and you don't impress God by starving yourself, or by minimalism, or by separating yourself from society.
3. The world's answers appear wise is in discipline. Severity to the body. It's impressive, but disciplining your body physically does not purify your soul.

The world's solutions will appear wise in worship, humility, and discipline, but the world's solutions do not give a person victory over fleshly desires. They do not help. They do not stop you from pursuing that list of the flesh. Henry Ironside said, "One may shut himself up in a monastery in order to escape the world, only to find he has taken the world in with him."

Human commandments and teachings appear wise, but can't solve the real problem.

Christians have no need to look to the world for victory over sin.