

5/24/26

Colossians 2:11-23

Paul has made it clear that the heresy involved human philosophy based on the traditions of men and the basic principles of the world, but now he also will show that there was a judaistic blend with it.

Paul now turns to declare how it is that in Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily and that we are complete in Him. Col. 2:11-23

Then he will command the Colossians to not give in to the false teachers ritualism, legalism, mysticism and asceticism.

2:11-15 The explanation about the sufficiency of Christ.

2:11 Jesus is sufficient to overcome sin nature.

- 1) The declaration to every believer, “In Him you were circumcised.” vs. 11a
 - a) The covenant of circumcision came to Abraham after his trusting in the flesh to beget a son, it was a seal of the covenant. Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:11
 - b) It was a rebuke and reminder that he had failed to trust God to give him a son of his own loins.

- c) It was to be an everlasting covenant for every Jewish male and any Gentile proselyte.
 - d) God honors His word above His name, so the Lord sought to kill Moses for not having circumcised his sons. Ex. 4:25
- 2) The particular type of circumcision for every believer, “with the circumcision made without hands.” vs. 11a
 - a) It is opposed to the physical surgery of removing the foreskin, it was inner spiritual circumcision of the heart, which was the true intention always. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Rom. 2:25, 28-29
 - b) The implication is that it was a divine work not human.
 - c) The point that it happened at was conversion, past tense “were”.
- 3) The proficient evidence of the inner circumcision of the heart is, “by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.” vs. 11b
 - a) Not that the body is evil in and of itself, but that sin nature and principle of sin is able to be overcome, so as not to be a slave of one’s sin nature by reckoning the Old Man dead. Rom. 6:6, 11; 7:24; Col. 3:9

- b) Putting off “apekduai” denotes both a stripping off and a casting away as getting out of one’s clothes.
- c) The picture is of discarding a piece of a filthy garment.
- d) It is an inner slaying of our sin nature by Christ. Gal. 3:27-28
- 4) Sin nature is never eradicated while in this body, it can only be overcome in Christ. Gal. 5:6, 11; 6:15; Phil. 3:3

2:12 Jesus is sufficient to live in the Spirit.

- 1) The public witness of baptism symbolized death to the life of sin, “Buried with Him in baptism.” vs. 12a
 - a) Water baptism does not forgive sin nor complete salvation, it is the outward public confession of what has happened inside by the circumcision without hands, death to the old life of sin.
- b) Buried with Him in water baptism also identifies the believer’s participation in the death and burial of Christ, spiritually. Rom. 6:1-4
 - 1)) Jesus was baptized to identify with sinful man, He had no sin. Matt. 3:15-16
 - 2)) Jesus said to His cousin John when he told Jesus that he needed to be baptized by Jesus, “we must full all righteousness. Matt. 1:15

- 3)) The Father gave John a sign to identify the Messiah, upon whom he saw the Holy Spirit descend and remain at His Baptist, Joh saw the Spirit like a dove descending on Jesus, the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Matt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:30-34
- c) Though the ritual of water baptism has no real power to bring it about, it is to be a celebration of the personal experience of death to the Old Man and life to the New Man. Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9
- 2) The personal life witness of burial has a counter part, resurrection, “in which you also were raised with Him.” vs. 12b
 - a) This does not refer to the physical resurrection of our body, but our spiritual resurrection for the new life.
 - b) As Jesus was physically raised out from the dead and revealed Himself to many, so the believer is raise and enabled to live for God.
- 3) The personal witness of belief is described, “Through faith in the working of God, who raised Christ from the dead.” vs. 12b-c
 - a) Faith in the working of God the Father in the vicarious work of God, in Christ, the object of our faith!
 - b) Total and complete faith in the revelation of the gospel that Jesus Christ is the

redeemer of the world, who died and was raised by God and that God is also able to bring death to my sin nature and impart resurrected life to my Spirit, the New Man. Col. 3:5-7

2:13 Jesus is sufficient to forgive all sins.

- 1) The past state of the Colossians prior to coming to Christ was spiritual death, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh.” vs. 13a-b
 - a) The word “dead” means they were dead to God, separated from God, the things of God and the life of God.
 - b) The reason for their spiritual dead condition is described in two ways.
 - 1)) First, being “in their trespasses “paraptoma”, it means willful disobedience. Eph. 2:1, 5
 - 2)) Second, “the uncircumcision of their flesh”, means depraved nature, the source of our sins and trespasses.
- 2) The present state of the Colossians after coming to Christ was that He made them spiritually alive with Him, “He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” vs. 13c-d
 - a) The believer is one with Jesus Christ, joint heirs, sons of God.
 - b) The manner is by having forgiven “chariographon” them of their trespasses.

* The word was used for the cancellation of a debt. Lk. 7:42, 43

- b) The extent of the forgiveness is “all” trespasses to be whiter than snow.
 - 1)) Once again the superlative “all” is to communicate no lack in the work of Christ.
 - 2)) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Ps. 32:1-2

2:14 Jesus is sufficient to remove all charges.

- 1) What Jesus did for us, “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirement that were against us, which is contrary to us.” vs. 14a-b
 - a) The reference is to a certificate of debt where the indictments were written out by hand to charge the individual prisoner.
 - b) Others see it as an I.O.U. note of an individual, “a signed confession of indebtedness”. Bruce
 - c) Paul is dealing with the Mosaic Law in the context, which the Gentiles were never under it but were nevertheless all guilty before God, Jew and Gentile by law or conscience. Rom. 2:14-29; 3:9-20, 27-31
 - 1)) God is the One who wrote the law with His own finger. Deut. 34:1

- 2)) The Law made no one just before God, it only accused them and condemned them! Gal 3:10-11
- 2) How Jesus did it, “And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” vs. 14c
- a) By all evidence we were guilty according to God’s law.
 - b) By all legal demands we were to pay for our sin and trespasses, according to God’s law.
 - c) All charges and debts that accused us and made us libel have been taken out of the way, having forgiven all sin and trespasses, having nailed them to the cross. Eph. 2:15
 - d) By the work on the cross, Christ canceled and removed all charges and debts by His blood, dying in our stead vicariously. Is. 53:1-12; 2Cor. 5:21; 1Jn. 2:2
 - 1)) The picture of “nailing it to the cross” points to the placard above the head of the criminal crucified, bearing the charges against him.
* This is the only time it appears in the New Testament!
 - 2)) The phrase wiped out “exaleipho” was used often signifying a scraping of the papyrus sheet, so it could be used again, to erase.

- a)) All this was accomplished through the instrument of the cross, which equates death that forgiveness and complete acquittal of all offenses against God and man were erased, remembering them no more! Matt. 27:39; Jn. 19:19; Ps. 50:1; Jer. 18:23
- b)) Some think it refers to the doing away of the Law, though it is true in the act of the work of Christ, but the context is to the individual guilt and culpability by not being able to keep the law unto perfection.
- c)) Christ fulfilling the Law men and women are dead to the Law and are able to marry another, namely Christ, who kept the entire Law. Rom. 7:4-6
- 3)) Removing guilt and shame to give us a clean conscience without guilt or condemnation.
- 4)) It is finished. Jn. 19:30; Rom. 3:24-25; 1Jn. 2:2
- 5)) Some see an allusion to women accused of adultery. Num. 5:23

2:15 Jesus is sufficient to destroy the power of Satan.

- 1) The defeat of the fallen angelic forces is declared, “Having disarmed principalities and powers.” vs. 15a; Eph. 6:12

- a) Disarmed “apekdusamenos” means to strip off from oneself all the powers of darkness that attempted to destroy Him, revealing they have no power over Him.
- b) Jesus descended to Hades scooped up all who died in faith waiting in the Bosom of the Father, the place of comfort or Paradise, then ascended with them to heaven and not one fallen angel could stop Him. Eph. 4:8-10
- 2) The defeat is vividly described, “He made a public spectacle of them.” vs. 15b
 - a) Here is the well know scene of the victory march of a conquering general who returned with the spoils of war, exhibiting their disgrace and lack of power to conquer him.
 - b) He put them to open shame and disgrace.
 - c) This is the climax of Christ’s authority, which they are not to allow anyone cheat them through philosophy. vs. 8
- 3) The defeat was celebrated, “triumphed over them on it.” vs. 15c
 - * The Roman generals would parade their captives through the streets to display their triumph of kings, generals, soldiers and people.
 - a) Jesus preached to those in hades. 1Pet. 3:19-20;
 - b) Hell could not hold Him. Acts 2:24; “Ps. 16:10”

- c) He tasted death for every man. Heb. 2:9-10
 - * In the Garden by a tree innocence was lost by choice, at the cross another tree redemption was gained and available only by personal choice!
- d) Paul used this type of vivid picture of the Roman triumph for the ministers of Christ. 2Cor. 2:4

2:16-19 The reasoning from the sufficiency of Christ.

2:16 The imposition of legalism.

- 1) The proclamation, “So let no one judge you.”
 - a) Literally, “Stop letting anyone judge you”, the implication being that someone had already.
 - b) This is an imperative command in the present tense.
- 2) The false teachers at Colosse were teaching a rigid life restriction for thrie life by legalism by naming five things, “in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths.”
 - a) In food most likely indicate Jewish origin, though it could include pagan asceticism, dealing with vegetables and meats. Lev. 10:9; Num. 6:3
 - b) In drink, prohibiting some things dealing with fermentation.

- c) Regarding a festival, feast days, observing certain holidays as more holy than others, dealing with the Jewish calendar.
- d) Regarding new moons, for religious observation, according to the law.
- e) Regarding Sabbaths, as a law to obey.
 - * Jesus was always getting in trouble over the Sabbath and said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath and He was Lord of the Sabbath. Mk. 2:27-28
- 3) Legalism has turned more people off to Christ than we even know and the problem started way back in the First Church Council and legalism was settled. Acts 15
 - a) The New Testament is clear about legalism to a self-righteous form of life to exalt oneself or merit God, it is mere bondage.
 - b) In reality it is really a matter of those who are weak in the faith and those who are strong, immature and mature. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1Cor. 8-10; 1Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:14; Heb. 9:10; 13:9-10; Gal. 4:9-11; 5:1

2:17 The identity of these things.

- 1) These things were all prophetic types of Christ, “which are a shadow of things to come.” vs. 17a

- 2) These things therefore were temporary and inferior, “but the substance is of Christ.” vs. 17b
 - a) The Old Testament was fragmentary and progressive revelation, the New Testament is the fulfilled and understood in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - b) The efficiency and permanence of the New covenant is superior to the Old covenant, also in glory. 2Cor. 3:7-13
 - c) The arrival of Christ finalized all these things, being the very substance “soma”, the body that cast the shadow and the shadow now has no value, having been fulfilled. Heb. 9:23-28; 10:1

2:18 The imposition of mysticism.

- 1) The warning against the false teachers declared, “Let no one cheat you of your reward.” vs. 16a
 - a) This is a present imperative active command again.
 - b) The word cheat “katabrabeueto” meant to rob you, umpire against you as an athlete.
 - c) In other words do not keep on allowing anyone to deny your claim to be a Christian or declare you disqualified in relation to Christ Who has prized you with Himself and salvation. 1Cor. 9:24; 2Tim. 4:7

- 2) The pretense of the false teachers, described, “taking delight in false humility and worship of angels.” vs. 16b
- a) Again many of these phrases are most likely direct quotes from the false teachers.
 - b) The individuals attempting to cheat them of their Christian reward were the false teachers who were taking delight in false humility and worship of angels.
 - 1)) Jesus was superior to all angels, He created them and they are not to be worshipped. Col. 1:16, 20; 2:15; Rev. 19:10
 - 2)) Men who are into the worship of the hierarchy of angels, rather than Christ who created them, their damnation was sure. Gal. 1:8
 - c) Fictitious humility which in fact umpired against the believer, due to not abiding by the rules, God’s revelation.
 - * Angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Heb. 1:14
 - d) These false teachers who delight or willfully were disqualifying them by false humility most likely because they professed the believer were not worthy to come to God directly, but rather by an intermediate eon or emanation!
 - * The same goes for Mary or any saint in the Catholic Church!

- 3) The activity of these men is identified as, “intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.” vs. 16c-d
- a) Men who relish and glory in their devoted search of such things “intruding into those things which he has not seen”, things they had imagined or lied about.
 - b) These men were “vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind. “they paraded false humility or religious pride as being initiated into their mystical rites, entering into fallen angel worship of visions of these emanations and aeons.
 - c) Men who relished in intimidating others by their proud mystical experiences, yet they were not of God.
 - d) Men and their experience then become the standard for spirituality and elitism.
 - e) Men who pride themselves in false humility because of their supposed access to God, rather than the one that has been secured by Jesus.
 - * Knowledge puffs up but love edifies. 1Cor. 8:1
 - f) Men who are dominated by the depraved and sinful natures and unspiritual abilities, condemn by he Scriptures.
 - * A syncretistic mixture of Jewish and pagan elements!

2:19 The simple failure of the false teachers.

- 1) The false teachers were dishonoring Christ, “and not holding fast the head.” vs. 19a
 * Jesus is the head of the body, the church, the one who has the preeminence. Col. 1:18; 2:10
- 2) They were disconnected from who is the source of all the body, “from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.” vs. 19b-d
 - a) Christ nourishes all the body, they were being mal-nourished by their false experiences.
 - b) Christ knits it all together by joints and ligaments, they were being knit together by something things of their vain imagination that would fall apart. Eph. 4:16
 - c) Christ causes the body to grow and to increase that is from God, they were not growing spiritually, but dead.
 - d) Christ is God, they did not have God.

2:20-23 The imposition of asceticism.

2:20 The conclusions in view of the sufficiency of Christ.

- 1) The affirmation of the new birth of the Colossians, “Therefore, if you died with

Christ from the basic principles of the world.” vs. 20a

- a) The word therefore meant consequently these things being so, since in fact they had died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, meaning that they had abandoned their old religious, superstitious ways. Col. 3:1
- b) The apostle Paul identifies these legalistic and mystical practices to be of pagan origin “basic principles of the world”.
- c) The sacred days, years, etc., of their pagan calendar, which was “philosophy and empty deceit” and without any doubt were syncretized into a Jewish background.
- d) The Colossians were using worldly so called wisdom to measure spirituality!
- e) The Colossians were to stand and defend their liberty in Christ.
- 2) The castigation of the Colossians in view of their new birth, “why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations.” vs. 20b-d
 - a) They were subjecting themselves to religious worldly regulations, which they left behind?
 * “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of

the world, and not according to Christ.” Col. 2:8

- b) The word subject “dogmatizesthe” means to permit oneself to be dominated by rules again, a present passive indicative.
- 1)) The word dogma and dogmatized come from this Greek word, they were not to be impressed nor intimidated by the false teachers.
 - 2)) I am always amazed at the amount of people who embrace teachings and practices that are contrary to the Scriptures .

2: 21 The ascetic practices are mentioned.

- 1) “Do not touch.” vs. 21a
- 2) “Do not taste.” vs. 21b
- 3) “Do not handle.” vs. 21c
- 4) These were most likely the very slogans of the false gnostic teachers.
 - a) These are human regulations contrary to Christ, in addition or substitution of the atonement of Christ that promised not only to make one spiritual and holy, but are the very evidence of one’s spirituality!
 - b) Asceticism was due to the belief that the body was sinful and must be denied.
 - c) The result led to the deprecation of the body, marriage, exaltation of virginity

and monasticism, with endless self-torture in the Catholic Church.

2:22 The source of these ascetic regulations is human, not divine revelation.

* This is a good reason not to practice them!

- 1) These ascetic practices by their nature perish with use and are temporary things that are unimportant to godliness, “which all concern things which perish with the using.” vs. 22a
* Rom. 14:17; 1Cor. 6:13
- 2) These ascetic practices by their very nature are sourced in man, “according to the commandments and doctrines of men?” vs. 22
 - a) The rehtorical question has only one corrcet answer! Yes!
 - b) The ascetic practices being taught by the Gnosice were the teachings of men not God, taboos of human inventions. Col. 2:8
 - c) Jesus said to the Pharisees, “But in vain you do worship Me teaching the commandments and doctrines of men.” Matt.15:9; Mk. 7:7
 - d) On the Sermon on the Mount repeatedly declared, “You have heard it said....but I say unto you.”

2:23 The inefficiency of these ascetic practces regarding spirituality.

- 1) These ascetic practices are spiritually deceptive, “These practices indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body.” vs. 23a-c
 - a) Do not miss that they seem to have an appearance of wisdom in self-impose religious worship, it is not revealed or directed by God or the Scriptures.
 - b) They are not true divine wisdom, but only appear to be, due to the fact they are not being drawn from the treasury of Christ. Col. 2:3
 - b) They are self-imposed by religion devoid of God’s commands, therefore not a true worship of God.
 - * The worship of angels.
 - c) They are based on “false humility” or mock humility and an abusive denial of the body needs.
 - * Serving to exalt man’s wisdom, honor and pride!
- 2) These practices have “but are of no value against the indulgences of the flesh.” vs. 23d
 - a) They have no power to remedy the sin nature of man nor sins of man, only appearance of wisdom. Gal. 5:16-17, 21
 - b) They are things of their particular “Philosophy”, the love of wisdom. Col. 2:8

- c) Legalism, mysticism and asceticism lead to gratify one’s flesh.
- d) Yet as Christians we recognize that though we are no longer bound by rules, there are certain things that we do not do or practice due to the fact that they are sin or not conducive to spiritual growth nor pleasing to God.
 - * “All things are lawful, but all things are not necessary, all things are lawful, but all things are edifying.” 1Cor. 10:23