

Colossians 2:16–23

Sunday, February 4, 2024

“Things to kNOw in order to Grow”

1. Say NO to Legalism

2. Say NO to Mysticism

3. Say NO to Asceticism

4. Say YES to Jesus!

¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival [feast day] or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Let no one pass judgment on you...don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days, annually, monthly, weekly, certain ceremonies or Sabbaths.

We've been set free from legalism of diet or days, we've been set free from the law, *"Let no one deny your claim to be Christians."* Based on any of these things.

They may have said something like, "Hey, make sure you eat only **UN**leavened bread, make sure you eat and celebrate the Passover Dinner, that's a mandatory feast you know, and yes, the Sabbath still stands, no work is to be done on the Sabbath!

Listen, they say, if you don't hold to these things, you're neither saved or sanctified.

Paul says, don't let anyone judge you by using the Mosaic diet or days, they were all just **shadows** of Christ.

Leaven was a picture of sin. Jesus bore that sin as our Passover Lamb. If we emphasize our diet, over His death, we kinda cancel Christ.

The sabbath day observance was primarily a message, that one day the Messiah would finish the work and give us rest.

If you read Hebrews 8:5; 10:1, it talks about living in the shadow lands.

The legalism of Judaism were only a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality...is Christ.

Expositor's, "The Colossians were to let no one "judge" their standing before God on the basis of their observance or nonobservance of the regulations of the Mosaic law. Paul's thought is that the Christian is freed from obligations of this kind (cf. v.14; Gal 4:9-11; 5:1). No one, therefore, should be permitted to make such things a test of piety or fellowship (cf. Ro 14:1ff.)."

But what if someone wants to eat unleavened bread, just as a reminder of Christ taking away our sin, or what if someone wants to enjoy that Seder meal?

As long as we don't make it a matter of salvation, and see it as a personal conviction, we're okay.

***Romans 14:1-5**

2. Say NO to Mysticism (and YES to Jesus)

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,

V. 16, "**Let no one judge you...**" on the basis of legalism.

And "**Let no one cheat you** of your reward due to mysticism.

Other translations say let no one defraud you, disqualify you, or condemn you."

The word cheat: "To pass judgment on, to condemn" to act as umpire."

Making the wrong call as a judge (arbiter), depriving someone of their rightful prize. It was used in ancient athletic contests of an umpire.

Let no one cheat you of your reward.

A reward that Jesus Himself wants to give you.

Revelation 22:12 (NKJV) "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to everyone according to his work."

2 John 8 (NIV) "Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully."

Ruth 2:12 (NKJV) "The Lord repay your work, and a **full reward** be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

The problem with these false teachers in Corinth is that they weren't teaching or making judgments based on the Bible.

They actually contradicted the Bible – and this can happen if we elevate our "experiences" or raise human tradition over truth.

These false teachers in Colossae were delighting in false humility, pretend piety, mysticism; they were probably saying to the people, "Listen, we're not good enough to talk to God, we need to go through angels as mediators."

Yea, I know what the Bible says, but the Lord showed me this...I had a dream the other night, a vision.

Charles Ryrie, *"Some were...claiming special mystic insight by way of visions.*

These guys were essentially saying that Jesus and His Word are not enough, and in the process, they were decapitating themselves.

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.

Can you picture yourself, clinging to Christ? Not physically, but spiritually, theologically?

Jesus is enough, He's all I need and all I want, and I refuse to be swayed away, even when life gets hard...and some popular person, or religious representative says that Christ and Christianity are not enough.

***Ruth 1:14-17**

Earlier, we read about reward. What does that reward really encompass?

It may refer to our very relationship with Christ. Don't let anyone cheat you out of that!

I'm sure it refers to those eternal rewards given to us when Christ returns.

But I'm also thinking, in context, it has to do with just growing - - as we're becoming, more and more LIKE Christ, His heart, His character.

He's the One, the very One, the only One who helps us grow, because He's the head we're the body, and we won't grow if we get decapitated or somehow separated, by legalism or mysticism.

Charles Ryrie, *"True spirituality comes from tenaciously holding on to Christ, the Head of His body."*

It's the same, same, but different over in ***Ephesians 4:15-16**

We're a body. As we hold to our Head, Jesus Christ, we'll grow, and then we'll help each other grow. If you grow, hopefully I'll help you grow. If you grow, you will help me grow, because we're together on this.

Christ is the Head of the body, the church, and is the source of true growth - but He uses people.

It's the Lord Jesus, He gets all the glory and all the honor, but I believe it's helpful to know, that in order to grow, He also uses the church.

1 Corinthians 3:5-6 (NKJV) "Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

There's so much we can say on this, but I was fascinated to discover that the Greek word translated "nourished" as Christ spiritually nourishes us, speaks of lavishly

providing, furnishing, or supporting someone and sparing no expense in the process. I think of it as spiritual protein, it makes growth possible.

It was used in Greek literature of supplying everything an ancient *chorus* needed to be a *grand* production. To provide everything needed to accomplish a *grand* objective. This word truth refers to the Lord giving *lavish provisions* to achieve His *grand* goal in every single “scene” of our lives.

Expositor's, *"The heretical teacher, **without** this contact with Christ, has cut himself off from the source of spiritual vitality for God's people and cannot possibly contribute to their growth."*

3. Say NO to Asceticism

²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic [elementary] principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject [submit] yourselves to regulations [rules]—

Last week we talked about the fact that the moment we're saved, we were baptized into the body of Christ, so we were identified and died with Christ and rose with power.

Now...usually when we think of dying to self, we think only of **NOT** doing bad things anymore.

But this death means we not only died to our rebellious living, we died to our – religious living; and by that I'm referring to the Old Testament Law, and any modern manmade rules and regulations set forth for salvation or sanctification.

We died to that!

Paul here asks them a valid question, if you died to that law and legalistic life, why are you now submitting yourselves to those rules and regulations?

In Christ we're forgiven and free.

John 8:32 (NKJV) "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The Christians in Colossae were being lured away from their simple love relationship with the Lord...and they got bogged down with heavy burdens.

The same thing happened to the Galatian church...and Paul asked them a similar question in:

Galatians 4:9–11 (NKJV) "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."

Expositor's, *"For ascetics the body was a thing to be buffeted and punished, to be treated like an enemy. They saw the body as evil and concluded that the way to holiness was to deny all the body's desires, refuse its appetites, and cut its needs down to an irreducible minimum. Asceticism was apparently a prominent feature of the Colossian heresy--one that could easily lead to the deprecation of marriage, the exaltation of monasticism, and the devising of endless means of self-torture. Paul condemns asceticism and urges the Colossians to reject it as a way of life."*

(Martin Luther) – sold all of his possessions to become a monk; To find peace with God, Luther zealously confessed every sin he could think of. He would confess every day, sometimes up to six hours a day. Always present was the fear: *Have I confessed every sin?* Then came a discovery even more distressing to Luther—there are sins which people commit that are not even known to them. But how could these be confessed if they were not known? Luther re-doubled his efforts and threw himself into constant all-night vigils, great long bouts of fasting — all to find forgiveness and peace with God.

As he once said: *"I was indeed a pious monk and kept the rules of my order so strictly that I can say: If ever a monk gained heaven through monkery, it should have been I. All my monastic brethren who knew me will testify to this. I would have martyred myself to death with fasting, praying, reading, and other good works had I remained a monk much longer."*

He deprived himself of sleep; he deprived himself of blankets when it was cold, he thought such sacrifices would bring him closer to God, or somehow contribute to his salvation, he flogged himself, thinking such torture would make him more holy – he desperately tried to love God in all this ascetism, but found no love. He became increasingly terrified of the wrath of God until one day he read Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." And he understood it.

He finally realized that you don't have to earn your way to heaven, you don't have to earn God's favor or love, it's free, as a gift from God to those who believe.

Expositor's, "The Christian must not permit life to become a round of rules again."

What rules do you have?

²¹ "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

1 Timothy 4:1–3 (NKJV) "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³ forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

Don't touch, don't taste, don't handle?

This goes beyond religion, this is pagan superstition.

God can't bless you or your day if you don't read for an hour, it's bad luck, just as bad as if you walked underneath a ladder, or broke a mirror, or black cat walked in front of you.

If any of this happens you have no power over demons!

Don't touch, don't taste, don't handle no bacon or shrimp!

²² which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

The moment you eat that bacon, it enters into your digestive system and will eventually be eliminated.

Now I'm not saying that bacon's good for you physically, but I can definitely say it has no bad bearing spiritually.

William Barclay, *"Paul uses an almost crude phrase which repeats in different words what Jesus had already said. He says, "These things perish as they are used" (Colossians 2:22). He means exactly what Jesus did when he said that food and drink are eaten and digested, and then excreted from the body, and flushed away down the drain (Matthew 15:17; Mark 7:19)."*

(Eating with unwashed hands – manmade traditions)

(Smoking? Won't take you to hell; buy it might get you to heaven faster) (my mom)

Paul closes by saying that life of legalism, mysticism, and asceticism might look good, but it does no good.

²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect [harsh treatment] of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

...but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

...they provide no help in conquering a person's sensual passions.

"Things to kNOw in order to Grow"

1. Say NO to Legalism

2. Say NO to Mysticism

3. Say NO to Asceticism

4. Say YES to Jesus!

Jesus is the only One who can help us overcome and grow!

Beware of:

Rules without Reason

Systems without Substance

Beliefs without Bible

Beware of Legalism, Mysticism, Asceticism

Legalism is the religion of human achievement and clashes with Divine accomplishment.

Mysticism usually starts with the desire for a deeper life with God (but in that search for the "deeper life" some fall off the deep end – and make things up)

Asceticism says no pepperoni pizza, no laughing allowed; no one rich can be right, make yourself suffer to be sanctified, and if you want to really be in ministry you can't be married. And God says no to asceticism... "I've given you all these things to enjoy, just when you enjoy them, know, this comes from Me."

Have you said YES to Jesus? If not, I pray you'd do so today!