

The Supremacy of Christ
A Study of Colossians
Week 05: Confronting the False Teachings

Scripture

Colossians 2:8-23

Key Points (Where We Are in History)

- Paul wrote to the Colossian Church, while he was under house arrest in Rome
- They had never met in person, but Paul wrote in response to the report of Epaphras (their pastor)
- The church was facing pressure to *mix religious systems*
- Paul wrote with the goal of showing Christ's supremacy over all things
Supreme – the highest rank, power, and authority in an organization or system

Motivation (Why They Need to Know It)

Bill Bright tells a story about a woman married to a tyrant. He didn't like the way she kept house, did laundry, or ironed his clothes. He didn't like the way she dressed or how she conducted herself in public. He criticized her for everything.

Early in their marriage he handed her a list of 25 rules. She hated it. She hated him. She had to constantly check her list to see if she was pleasing him – and to stay out of trouble. She usually failed and it caused friction between them. He made her feel miserable and inferior.

Then one day, much to her great joy, he died. She soon fell in love with and married a wonderful man. They loved each other very deeply. She practically broke her neck to please him. One day she found the old list from her first husband. As she read it, feelings of anger and inferiority returned. Then she started laughing. As she checked the list, she realized that she was now doing all that was on the list for her new husband and more. And she was doing all this with great joy because she loved this man so much.

The difference?

In the first scenario, her actions are out of **obligation** (love is one-sided and earned).
In the second scenario, her actions are out of **love** (love is shared and freely given).

Paul wanted the Colossians' actions to arise from *love, not obligation*.

Information (What They Need to Know)

Paul urged the church at Colossae to be rooted and built up in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) but warned about the false teachings that could distract them from Christ.

Three Obligations Leading Away from Christ...

▪ **The Obligation to Know More** (Colossians 2:8-10)

Colossians 2:8 (ESV) See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. **9** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, **10** and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

✓ Philosophy – love of wisdom

“Gnostics claim to possess higher knowledge known only to few. This higher knowledge, does not come from the Bible, but is acquired on some mystical higher plane of existence. Gnostics see themselves as a privileged class elevated above everybody else by their higher, deeper knowledge of God.”

✓ Wisdom – application of experience, knowledge, and judgment

✓ The issue is not wisdom or knowledge, but the SOURCE of wisdom

1 Corinthians 1:21 (NLT) Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. **22** It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom.

○ One is according to human thinking and reasoning

○ The other is rooted and built up in Christ, in whom the fullness of God dwells

▪ **The Obligation to Do More** (Colossians 2:11-17)

“The Gentile Christians in Colosse had no need to conform to Jewish rules and regulations, such as circumcision. For in Christ they had been circumcised. This spiritual ‘circumcision’ was done by Christ, not by man. It was in fact a crucifixion or putting off of the body, a circumcision of the heart. Their sinful nature was put off by Christ’s death and resurrection. What people were in Adam (sinful, fallen, and corrupt) was destroyed by Christ. Now ‘in Christ’ a believer is a new creation. And having a new Head a believer has a new authority for his life — not the Law of Moses but the life of Christ.” – Bible Knowledge Commentary

Colossians 2:13 (ESV) And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, **14** by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

■ **The Obligation to Stay Away from More** (Colossians 2:18-23)

Colossians 2:20 (ESV) 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— **21** “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” **22** (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? **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.

✓ In Christ, rules and regulations have no power to justify or sanctify

✓ “Do not handle, do not taste, Do not touch”

Asceticism always emphasizes abstinence; spirituality is measured by an absence of certain sins

- **Do not handle** (maybe sexual abstinence for those who were married and the prevention of marriage for those who were single)
- **Do not taste** (Avoiding specific foods was necessary)
- **Do not touch** (originates with humans, often hypocritical, no power to overcome sin nature)

✓ Asceticism – seeking to earn holiness through prideful self-denial

“These verses point out the futility of asceticism, which is the attempt to achieve holiness by rigorous self-neglect, self-denial, and even self-infliction. Since it focuses on temporal ‘things that all perish as they are used,’ asceticism is powerless to restrain sin or bring one to God. While reasonable care and discipline of one’s body is of temporal value, it has no eternal value, and the extremes of asceticism serve only to gratify the flesh. All too often, ascetics seek only to put on a public show of their supposed holiness.” – John MacArthur

Application (What They Need to Do)

How can I be motivated by love instead of obligation?

Colossians 2:6 (ESV) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, **7** rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught...

- We received Christ through God’s goodness and grace through no effort of our own
- We continue to enjoy and live in God’s goodness and grace through the Spirit’s power and the Word’s truth

Galatians 5:16 (ESV) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh