

OUTLINE

The Dangers of Legalism and the Tyranny of Sin - Colossians 2:20-23

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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— 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.

Introduction and Background

- hear this story of a preacher who skated to church

The story was told some years ago of a pastor who found the roads blocked one Sunday morning and was forced to skate on the river to get to church, which he did. When he arrived the elders of the church were horrified that their preacher had skated on the Lord's day. After the service they held a meeting where the pastor explained that it was either skate to church or not go at all. Finally one elder asked, "Did you enjoy it?" When the preacher answered, "No," the board decided it was all right!

- imagine if the roads were closed because a snow storm and I had to snowshoe to church so that I could preach and lead the worship service

- then imagine the greatest concern of the elders was “did I enjoy the walk to the church?”

- that might be the most bizarre question a preacher could be asked in such a circumstance

- the preacher in this short story took the initiative to speedily get to church because the normal means of transportation to church were not possible

- the preacher likely had God’s commands in mind when he was skating to church

1) the command to be in worship with God’s people is very clear in the Bible (Hebrews 10:25)

2) the command to preach the Word of God is very clear in the Bible (2 Timothy 4:2)

- but the elders at the “skating pastor’s church” were more concerned that the preacher might have enjoyed skating to church and thus might have violated the Sabbath according to their man-made _____

- they were so focused on man-_____ rules (not skating on Sunday) that they forgot to see the importance of preaching and fellowship

- this is the danger of _____ because it focuses more on man-made rules and regulations instead of the original intent of the Word of God

- the _____ of the church elders in this short story is similar to the legalism that Paul is writing against in Colossians 2:16-23

- last time we saw the _____ teachings of these false teachers and the _____ they were putting on the Colossian church as we looked at Colossians 2:16-19

- following these Jewish rules and regulations, that Paul mentions in Colossians 2:16-19, do not _____ sinful humans

- these Jewish food laws and celebrations only _____ people to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ

- Paul mentions 5 issues that these false teachers were pushing on these Christians in Colossians 2:16

- the _____ teachers were preaching that the Colossian church must:

- i. drink the right drinks
- ii. eat the right _____
- iii. celebrate the right festivals
- iv. celebrate the new moon festival
- v. _____ on the right day

- they professed that if the Colossian church did not follow these rules then they did not have _____ of life in Christ

- furthermore, these false teachers at Colossae were focused on _____ spiritual with their false _____, the worship of angels and boasting about their visions that they had seen (2:18)

- Paul points this church to the _____ greatness of Jesus Christ as he deals with these false teachings by highlighting three important truths about Jesus Christ

- i. Jesus is the sovereign Lord who is the substance and _____ the Old Testament laws (Colossians 2:17)
- ii. Jesus is the sovereign Lord who is _____ over the church
- iii. Jesus is the source of _____ for the church (Colossians 2:19)

- now we can look at the 2nd part of this section on the _____ teachers in Colossians 2:20-23

Brief Outline

1) (2:20) Died with Christ

2) (2:21-22) Do not Handle, Taste, Touch

3) (2:23) Does not Stop Indulgence

1) (2:20) Died with Christ

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world,

- Paul is trying to _____ with these Colossians and assure them that they should not go back to the false ways of living because of their relationship to _____

- these Christians in Colossae had _____ with Christ to these satanic forces (the elementary spirits)

- Paul reminds them of the wonderful _____ of Christ and what Jesus has done for them

- Paul uses the word “_____” which points these Christians back to what he has said about the _____ of Christ in Colossians 2:11-15

Colossians 2:11-15 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ 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.¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

- these Christians have died with Christ and that means that the authority of their sinful nature has been _____ off
- these Christians have died with Christ and that means that they have been _____ to new life in Jesus Christ by the _____ of the Holy Spirit
- these Christians have died with Christ and that means they have been made _____ with Christ
- these Christians have died with Christ and that means they have _____ their sins forgiven
- these Christians have _____ with Christ and that means that their record of sin has been _____
- these Christians have died _____ Christ and that means that the satanic rulers and authorities who have held them _____ have been defeated by Jesus Christ
- these Christians, and every believer in Christ, have died to the satanic forces that had _____ over them

- it would be helpful for us to explain what sin and these demonic _____ do to us so that we can fully understand what we have been _____ from

- the strange thing about our human condition is sometimes people might not even know that they are in bondage to sin or to demonic powers

- an Anglican minister used an illustration of a dog to help us understand that humans might not even understand their bondage to sin

"There is a yard where a dog is heavily chained. The dog, however, is fast asleep, and so he does not realize his bondage. Later on we may even notice the dog eating his food, still chained, but as the food is close to the kennel his chain is not irksome, and he is thus still unconscious of his bondage. "

- this dog is not free and does not even know it

- much like people who are outside of Jesus Christ, they are _____ and they do not even _____ it

- let us look at one of the clearest descriptions of _____ found in the Bible in Romans 3:9-18

Romans 3:9-18 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does _____, not even one."¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips."¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of _____ and bitterness."¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known."¹⁸ "There is no _____ of God before their eyes."

- this description of _____ shows us the tyranny or cruelty of sin

- 3:9 – all humans no matter their background are under the tyranny and _____ of sin
- 3:10 – no human being is upright or _____ before God
- 3:11 – no human being has understanding of the greatness of God on their own
 - no human being is _____ or trying to find God on their own
- 3:12 – no human being is in relationship with God on their own
 - _____ humans are totally depraved, this means that our whole person is corrupted by sin
 - no human being does what is _____
- 3:13-14 – no human being uses his speech for the _____ of God but their speech is corrupt
- 3:15 – all humans have hearts that are bitter and _____
- 3:16 – all humans are filled with ruin and _____
- 3:17 – all humans are _____ peaceful
- 3:18 – all humans do _____ fear God
 - in this section we see our human condition _____ from Jesus Christ

- after we see our horrible and _____ human condition now we can see the wonderful grace of God
- because of the work of Christ we who are Christians are _____ from our sinful condition
- our _____ still can have the desire to sin, but the sin no longer _____ over us
- because of Christ we have _____ from the hate, bitterness, atrocious speech and all the other sins that are mentioned here
- because of Christ we are made _____ before the Lord, we are able to seek God and we are able to _____ God
- because of Christ we can have _____ and harmony with others
- this is the _____ of dying with Christ to the elementary spirits of the world!
- thanks be to God through Jesus Christ who gives us this _____ and joy!

why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations--

- Paul is asking them the obvious question, “_____ you have died with Christ, why are you still living as though you are _____ to the world”
- Paul highlights a great reality for us, Christ has _____ us, now we must _____ for Christ and stop living for things that have _____ to do with Christ
- these Colossians were being persuaded to _____ and to live for things that were not connected to Jesus Christ which we see in Colossians 2:21

2) (2:21-22) Do Not Handle, Taste, Touch

"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"

- Paul mentions _____ regulations that are connected to the Jewish purity laws
- these _____ teachers were saying that the Colossians were not to handle, taste or touch

i) Do not handle

- this word “handle” has the idea of not making contact with something that is _____

- as recorded in the Old Testament, the people of Israel were not to _____ things that were impure
- if a person touched something that was impure, they would _____ impure
- therefore they would be disqualified from participating in public worship and would be _____ off from Israel

- Leviticus 7:21 helps us _____ this idea

Leviticus 7:21 And if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether human uncleanness or an unclean beast or any unclean detestable creature, and then eats some flesh from the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings, that person shall be _____ off from his people."

ii) Do not taste

- we know that the _____ had not only strict food _____ but also strict requirements for washing and cleansing utensils that were used in food preparation and eating
- Leviticus 11:1-47 explains in great _____ the foods that the Jews were not to consume and the food that were approved to eat
- with this command Paul is referring to the Jewish food _____ that these false teachers were _____ upon the Colossians

- Paul has already addressed the _____ food restrictions in Colossians 2:16

Colossians 2:16 Therefore let no one pass _____ on you in questions of food and drink,

iii) Do not touch

- this _____ is very similar to the first command "do not handle"
 - what some commentators think these false teachers were _____ was an abstinence of sexual activity even within the boundaries of biblical _____
 - there is strong evidence that certain Jewish sects called for complete abstinence of sexual activity in _____
 - Paul deals with a group like this in 1 Timothy
- 1 Timothy 4:1-3** Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to _____ spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the _____.

- these false teachers were saying that you could only be _____ if you followed _____ teaching of purity
- but their teaching was _____ rooted in Jesus Christ and in the fact that Jesus Christ _____ the law perfectly

(2:22) (referring to things that all perish as they are used)-- according to human precepts and teachings?

- these requirements of the law perish because they are _____ in Christ
- these requirements are _____ in Christ

Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to _____ them.

- _____ says that foods we eat do not make us impure or _____
- now some foods are going to make you feel terrible
- if you have watched the movie "Supersize Me" you know what fast food can do to you
- the man in that movie ate McDonalds for every meal for months
- the result was he felt terrible and had serious health problems after this experiment
- but health problems and sluggishness do not mean that you are _____
- _____ says that what makes a person impure is their sinful _____ and this exactly what Jesus says in the gospel of Mark!

Mark 7:18-19 And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside _____ defile him, ¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared _____ foods clean.)

- furthermore, Paul affirms that these food laws are the teachings and traditions of _____
- Paul has already said that the philosophy and empty _____ was according to human tradition (Colossians 2:8)
- Paul says here that these _____ are according to the teaching and precepts of humans
- therefore they do not give us _____ of life that is found only in Jesus Christ

3) (2:23) Does Not Stop Indulgence

These have indeed _____ of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body,

- these man-made _____ and regulations seem to have an appearance of 3 things

i) wisdom in promoting self-made religion

- these rules and regulations might _____ to contain wisdom but they do not contain _____
- why? because these rules are not _____ in Jesus Christ who is the source of wisdom (Colossians 2:3)

ii) asceticism

- these _____ might encourage people to whip themselves and to deny themselves
- but these acts of self-inflicted pain do not _____ us to Jesus Christ

iii) severity of the body

- these rules encourage people to treat their body severely through physical pain or denying the body food and water _____ they do not point us to the greatness of Jesus Christ

but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

- we see that these commands have no _____ because they do not stop the sinful desires of the _____

- imagine if you fast for days -- that will not help you _____ with your sinful nature
- imagine if you whip yourself and punish your body -- that will not help you _____ your anger and rage
- imagine if you make up your own rules -- these rules will not help you put to _____ the sin that remains in your heart
- bringing man-made rules to _____ sin in your heart is like bringing a nerf gun to battle the Canadian Army
- these rules do not _____ hearts, these rules do not give us the Holy Spirit
- in order to battle sin we must _____ with the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God
- man-made _____ cannot _____ your heart
- they will only bring you more _____ and sadness but with Christ we can have transformed _____, victory over sin and freedom from guilt

Application

1) Only Christ Can Deliver From the Tyranny or Cruelty of Sin

- the Bible declares from Genesis to Revelation that _____ is dangerous
- our sin against a _____ God separates us from God
- our _____ puts up barriers between us and God
- our sin _____ us off from this compassionate Lord
- Isaiah writes clearly about the danger of sin in Isaiah 59:2
Isaiah 59:2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have _____ his face from you so that he does not hear.

- no amount of abstaining from food can bring a sinful person _____ to God
- no amount of whipping yourself can bring a sinful person back to _____
- no amount of severity to the body can tear down the barriers _____ us and God
- the only thing that can bring us back to God is the _____ of Jesus Christ
- the only person who can _____ down the barriers between us and God is Jesus Christ
- Hebrews reminds us of the _____ of Christ
Hebrews 10:10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

- if you are a Christian today, _____ the Lord, because God has been gracious to you, not because of anything you have ever done, but simply because of His _____
- if you are a Christian today, you have experienced the tender _____ of God, because you have been _____ by a merciful God and not by any action of your own doing
- Christian let us worship God proclaiming all _____ be to Christ!
- hear the lyrics of this hymn called "All Glory Be To Christ"!

*Should nothing of our efforts stand No legacy survive
Unless the Lord does raise the house In vain its builders strive*

*To you who boast tomorrow's gain Tell me what is your life
A mist that vanishes at dawn All glory be to Christ!*

- if you are _____ Jesus Christ come to Christ trusting in Him alone
- do not come to Christ with the attitude that you have been _____ enough and therefore deserve God's mercy and grace
- no! come to Christ and _____ in His work alone to deliver you from the tyranny of sin!

2) Man-Made Rules Cannot Change Your Heart

- John Piper writes this on legalism:

I faced and saw the weakness of legislated righteousness years ago. I cut my eye teeth on preaching against THE BIG FIVE—dancing, drinking, smoking, gambling, and theater going. I heard messages against these things by the dozen. I heard very little about gossip, covetousness, a hateful spirit, etc. I observed that people who adopted this separated life often become pharisaic and proud of their separation, and I heard very few sermons against such pride. For example, one preacher I knew observed that while some women thought separation meant wearing long hair, they often had tongues as long as their hair!

- Piper is exactly right here on this paragraph
 - we might _____ we have mastered the Christian life because we do not dance, smoke drink and whatever, but we can become _____ and self-righteous in thinking we are better than everyone else
 - but what we need is a daily dose or even an hourly dose of the _____ of Jesus Christ
 - we need the constant _____ of Christ's work on the Cross!
 - _____ Jesus can save and only Jesus can cause us to _____ in holiness!
 - Jesus Christ is our _____ and being connected to Him is how we grow
- Colossians 2:19** and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, _____ with a growth that is from God.

- Christian, let us _____ in the Holy Spirit, this means we depend upon the Holy Spirit to _____ us by the Word of God
- this also means that when we are tempted, we seek God and His Word to empower us against the _____ of sin

3) Avoid Foolish Man-Made Beliefs by Keeping in the Word

- we as Christians are prone to _____ and we are weak
- because we are _____ and prone to wander we need to keep ourselves in the _____
- how do we avoid getting _____ into man-made and legalistic teaching? by _____ in the Word of God
- the Bible is God's Word to us, so let us have reverence for the Word of God by eagerly _____ to hear His voice though it
- let us be eager to hear God's _____ as He teaches us, corrects us, and trains us by His _____!