

Theme: The ways and wisdom of the "religious" (those who would add to or seek to supplant Christ's perfect and completed work) will fail to serve God or subdue the flesh, even as they profess to do both. We must not be taken captive by their "empty deceit."

Background: Warnings and Safeguards

Introduction: Does anyone remember *Jonathon Livingston Seagull*? The permutations of "spiritual" philosophies are endless.

- I. The Ancient Danger (dangers, warnings in context)
  - A. Human judges (vv. 16 & 17)
    1. Human standards
      - a. Decidedly Jewish flavor (and easiest to "define")
        - Maintaining all the Jewish distinctions
        - But food is "clean" for the saints (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:15; Romans 14:20)
      - b. Similar concerns addressed elsewhere (Romans 14-15; 1 Corinthians 8-9)
        - Exercising Christian liberty
      - c. Threatening the existence of Christian liberty
        - No longer matter of conscience
    2. Shadows vs. "substance" (v. 17)
      - a. Shadow?
        - "of the things to come" (Hebrews 8:5)
      - b. Substance?
        - The substance is "the body of Christ"
        - The physical and spiritual reality of Israel's worship (Hebrews 10:1)
  - B. Disqualified! (vv. 18 & 19)
    1. Their perceived spiritual life
      - a. Humility - What does "humility" refer to? (see 3:12)
        - Humbling yourself (through asceticism? (ESV))
        - "False humility" (NIV)
        - "Delighting in humility" (my preference)
      - b. Worship
        - "Worship of angels"?
        - People who delight in worshipping angels?
        - Nothing greater than angels (messengers)?
        - Worship with the angels?
      - c. Visions
        - Claiming extraordinary insight
        - Contrast with Paul's account (2 Corinthians 12)
    2. Their real spiritual life?
      - a. Pride!
        - They are puffed up (arrogant!)
        - A sensuous in mind
        - "mind of the flesh" (Romans 8:6)
        - Without reason
      - b. Not holding to the Head (19)
    3. Your life in Him
  - C. Be wise

1. You died with Christ - It is the main point of 9-15
    - a. To the "elemental spirits"
      - No longer under control of the "elemental spirits"
    - b. Dead to the world
      - To its power and authority
      - It holds not path to spiritual life
    - c. Man-made regulations vs. God-ordained laws
      - Don't fear "contamination" by the things of the world
      - They actually aid what they claim to fix!
- NOTE: Do not confuse God's laws with man's rules.

## II. The Present Danger

- A. I'll be the judge
  - Do we judge and disqualify - by drawing a tight circle?
  - How tight a circle do we draw around ourselves as the true?
- B. Living by the book - the Rule book
  1. Making the rules!
    - Substituting "rules" for a changed heart
    - The danger still exists!
  2. A do-it-yourself religion!
    - Putting ourselves at the center
- C. Pursuing the Experience of Religion
  1. Danger: religion that is "inward" and "mystical"
    - The "fantasy" world we want
  2. Faith that is "outward" (toward Christ) and physical (changing me)

## III. Our Only Hope

- A. Stay connected to your Head
- B. Through our Head we can live
- C. Through our Head we can grow