

Colossians 2:16-3:4

In our time together last week, we learned that there are laws or decrees that are against us and hostile to us. But Jesus...

1. Forgave all of our transgressions...law breaking
2. He canceled out the certificate of our debt consisting of decrees against us
3. He took it out of the way and nailed it to the cross!

Therefore...

READ/PRAY

There is a looming threat to their stability that Paul puts his finger on in this text.

1. Someone is attempting to resurrect the old covenant, Old Testament law...those decrees...that Jesus dealt with fully on the cross.
2. He is concerned that the believers at Colossae might be pulled off course by these teachings.
4. Their stability is first and foremost in his mind

v4 *I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.*

v8 *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*

5. Because of what Christ has already done...and because of his concern he goes on to remind the Colossians

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

Can't you see the Gentile Colossians excited about Jesus?

1. They were just reminded of all that Jesus had done in and for them.
 - a. He circumcised their hearts, buried their old, fleshly man, and raised them to walk in newness of life
 - b. He took them from death to life
 - c. He released them from the pressure of performance and made them complete
 - d. He forgave them, canceled the record of their debt, nailed it to the cross, and claimed victory over death and the devil.
2. They have been reminded of all that Jesus had done for their salvation.
3. Now their bubble is being burst, apparently by Jews who are saying, yes, but....

There are 2 primary areas that Paul addresses here.

1. **Diet v16a**

- a. We have some rules guys!
- b. You need to avoid certain foods that are unclean
- c. You need to avoid certain foods that could have been offered to idols
- d. You really need to be more careful!

2. Days v16b

- a. We have some rules guys!
 - b. Festivals need to be kept. They are prescribed in the OT
 - c. Sabbaths need to be observed.
3. Apparently some Jews were on a crusade to ensure that Gentile Christians had a diet that was pleasing and a pattern of worship that was pleasing to God...in their view.

Romans 14:2-13 *One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One person regards one day above another; another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*

Why would Paul, a Jew and a former Pharisee put so little emphasis on the Old Testament law of God?

1. Remember, Paul has made it clear that he has been made a minister...remember?
2. 2 Corinthians 3:6 *(God) made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*
3. How can he say this?

17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

There is a shadow that is cast on the ground, but the substance is the object that intercepts the rays of light.

1. We would mock anyone that we found staring at a shadow of the Eiffel tower, taking photos of the shadow of the Eiffel tower, and trying to attract others to the shadow.
2. We would want to go up and tap him on the shoulder and say, look up! See the substance. See the tower!

When we get focused on the OT law and decrees of the Old Covenant without recognizing or seeing the substance of Christ, we are being even more foolish!

1. Recognize the shadow, but don't stare at it. Let it lead you to look up to the substance who is Christ.
2. Hold on to the substance, who is Jesus.
3. Hebrews 10:1 *For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.*

It is deadly dangerous to get pulled off course and distracted by shadows. It robs you of the prize: Christ.

18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)--in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

What Paul is warning against in all of these words is simply legalism.

1. Legalism Turns Christianity into a list of do's and don'ts found in the Bible

- a. There is some truth in this type of legalism.
 1. If we know Christ we will desire to obey Him
 2. If we love Him we will strive to keep His commands
- b. The problem is, that this type of legalism puts **the emphasis** on crossing the outward t's and dotting the outward i's rather than dealing with the inner heart.
- c. The danger is, people turn Christianity into lifeless dead religion...which is not Christianity.
 1. If you have a tendency to feel better about yourself and your standing with God when you perform well...this may be you.
 2. Remember that on the worst day of your Christian life, it is Christ alone
 3. Remember on the best day of your Christian life, it is Christ alone
- d. Christianity is not rooted in do's and don'ts but in a heart that loves Christ.
- e. Proverbs 21:2 *Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the*

hearts.

2. Legalism Separates the spirit of the law from the letter of the law

- a. Jesus heard it constantly from the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath day!
- b. They didn't even get the spirit of the law! They were focused on the letter.
- c. *What if an elderly woman of the family, the matriarch should fall in the field and needed to be brought back to the house? Could you take a litter (stretcher) to her in order to bring her out of the field? The rabbis debated this back and forth, some saying yes and some saying no. Some said no because it was too dangerous for in taking out the wooden stakes, the poles that would be a part of the litter might drop and dig a furrow in the ground, and one would have plowed and desecrated the Sabbath. Was it better to leave Granny in the field than to desecrate the Sabbath by plowing? Al Mohler*
- d. We have to be careful as we look at Scripture that we don't just see what it says, but what it means.

3. Legalism Treats my opinions and preferences as if they were commands.

- a. KJV
- b. Dress code
- c. Long hair. Tattoos.
- d. Acceptable instruments, acceptable songs

4. Legalism gives evidence that the Spirit has been quenched and/or grieved

- a. Wherever true, joyful, passion and love for Christ diminishes, rules and regulations are brought in to maintain what the power of Christ once created.

- b. If you erect enough rules, an institution can endure for decades after the spiritual life that brought it into existence is long gone.
- c. Legalism becomes the “power” instead of Christ.

Why is legalism so attractive?

23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

These legalistic “convictions” make us look good.

- 1. We look really pious!
- 2. We sound really religious.
- 3. There is a Pharisaical aura that surround us that we can often pass off as holiness.
- 4. *All men and women are born legalists.* Martin Luther

But notice! Though these legalistic “convictions” make us look good, they make no difference when it comes to the flesh!

- 1. Pull out all the laws, all the decrees, and all the extra rules you can find. They don’t help!
- 2. These legalistic “convictions” make no difference when it comes to the flesh!
- 3. We come to Jesus by grace through faith and then instead of going on with Christ we go back to the old way.
 - a. What rules do I need to follow to please God.
 - b. That doesn’t work because our problem is not external. Our problems are internal!

So **what is the solution?** DON’T MISS THIS

- 1. The exchange...he took our sin, but he also made us complete! We live a Christ like life, not by trying harder but by receiving, believing, and loving Him more.
- 2. Hebrews 7:18-19 *For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

What is this better hope? Paul reminds us again in v1-4

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Turn your attention from trying to appear religious and focus your attention on Christ!

- 1. Seek the things above where Christ is.
- 2. Set your mind on things above (in other words, Christ), not on things of the earth.
- 3. Christ must be our life! When He is revealed, we will be revealed with Him in glory.
- 4. Focus your heart, your mind, your eye on Christ and things will take care of themselves.

When you are hungry, do you want to see a picture of apple pie or do you want to eat apple pie?

- 1. You can see the picture in the Old Covenant with its laws and decrees
- 2. But you can partake by relying on Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone!
- 3. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Cultivate a love for Him!

- a. A passionate love for Christ will move anyone towards holiness
- b. A passionate love for Christ will move anyone to love their brothers and sisters
- c. A passionate love for Christ will move anyone to prioritize their lives more appropriately
- c. A passionate love for Christ will enable anyone to persevere through numerous tests, trials, and temptations
- d. A passionate love for Christ will move anyone to invest their lives in advancing the Kingdom of God on earth to the ends of the earth!

Do you love Him?

1. I didn't ask if you cross all your biblical t's and dot all your biblical i's.
2. I didn't ask if you know the Scriptures and its commands.
3. I didn't ask if you pass off as someone who is religious because you keep all the unwritten rules.
4. I asked you if you love Jesus Christ? If you are passionate about knowing Him and loving Him more.

Isn't that what Jesus asked Peter, not once...not twice...but 3 times in their last recorded conversation?

1. There was a reason for that.
2. The thing that would keep Peter from denying Christ again would not be a new and improved list of rules.
3. It would be his love for Jesus.
4. It is the same for us.