

1st Over All

Colossians

Week 9 – Colossians 2:16-23

Sanctified in Jesus Christ

Purpose: Christians living in the freedom of Jesus Christ will respond to His work in them to set them apart, make them holy, and empower them to live in the truth of Jesus Christ and avoiding the captivity of man's religion, morality, and work.

Call to Worship

Stand and Read

Colossians 2:16-17 ESV

16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **17** These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Prayer

Pray gratefully for God to empower His people to live sanctified in Jesus Christ and not being held captive by things that He fulfilled in an effort to be set apart by something without substance or power.

Sermon

Series Graphic (SLIDE 1)

Opening Idea

Set Apart

A young king inherited a kingdom that was dominated by rituals and empty traditions. He continued in those things and thought he was successful. Then one day, one of the servants discovered an ancient book that contained commands that were different than what the people had been doing. The servant urgently took the book to the king and told him what was in the book. The young king read the book and was astonished to discover that God had commanded the nation of Israel to not worship idols or make altars to other gods and to observe the Passover feast in remembrance of God's work to set the Israelites free from Egyptian slavery and establish them in the land promised to Abraham. King Josiah at once tore down idols or altars, cleared the temple of any unclean and idol image, and reconstituted the Passover meal. He committed before the nation to plead to God for forgiveness and to obey and honor God. These were not empty rituals but were vital acts of obedience and renewed God's people's hope and faith in the Messiah who would set the people free from the slavery of sin.

Paul continues writing to the Colossians to not be taken captive to empty things, but to be set apart to obey and glorify God. The things that once were commanded had found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and now they were called to live in the truth of Christ and not be taken captive by human works that cannot sanctify God's people for His use.

Let's continue studying the letter from Paul to the Church in Colossae and grow in living with Jesus Christ being 1st Over All!

Reminder (SLIDE 2)

We Need God's Help

We Will Live as Reconciled People

Be A Catalyst for Worship

We Will Make Christ Known

God Makes Us Worthy to Walk

We Will Live as "Connected In" People

We Live to Show Christ is 1st Over All

We Will Live Liberated in Jesus Christ

Read

Colossians 2:16-23 ESV

(SLIDE 3) **16** Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **17** These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. **18** Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,

(SLIDE 4) **19** and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. **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?

(SLIDE 5) **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.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 6)

Notes on Colossians 2:16-23

Christ over Festivals and Nature (v. 16-17)

16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Paul has declared Jesus Christ's triumph over sin and His effective work to cancel the record of debt in the earlier passage. Jesus Christ is victorious over sin and death and through His death He completed the necessary work of justification and reconciliation. Jesus is 1st Over All! Paul writes that since Jesus is victorious and has saved His people, His people are not swayed toward nor shamed into living in captive things any longer. They are to live confidently in the freedom of Christ. This is a complex idea. First, we are not free from oversight or correction from our brothers and sisters. God uses His people to train and build each other up. The "teachers and wise ones" are not brothers and sisters in Christ, but they are likely false teachers who are teaching a life by addition – adding Jesus to your life is good and adding old rituals and requirements that are no longer in effect is good. Life by addition can be life incarcerated. Second, this directive to "let no one pass judgement on you" isn't permission to live independently and reject all judgement and guidance. This is a directive to reject the false teachings that appear righteous, but are actually human philosophy, human traditions, human rituals. The Christian is to spiritual discern the human work to change, see it as counterfeit, and reject it. The child of God should seek the wise counsel of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ and welcome their judgement (Leviticus 19:15 & John 7:24) and see it as God working to grow and build His people up. Rejecting judgement concerning things that are not able to save and that have no influence to make righteous is responding to truth and righteousness. The Colossians were directed to reject the old practices concerning food and drink, festivals, new moon festival/Sabbath, or Sabbath practices. These things that were needed for righteousness and Godliness were no longer affective. Jesus Christ has accomplished all that would be needed for salvation and for sanctification. Sanctification in biblical terms is defined as being set apart for special use or made holy. It is best understood in New Testament terms to become more like Christ, the perfect and holy one. Paul clarifies that these things that once set God's people apart were never the main way of sanctification but were a "shadow of things to come." A shadow is the partial image or likeness, but the genuine thing is much greater and more meaningful. Paul writes that Jesus Christ is the greater thing. He is the one who makes God's people sanctified (holy). He is the true human and in who's likeness we are being changed into.

Christlikeness Over Information and Feelings (v. 18-19)

18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

There were other things the false teachers were prescribing and requiring the Colossian Christians to do in order to be holy. These things were never demanded by God but were again

things that humans felt made them holier and more righteous. Paul writes that they demanded and insisted on asceticism as a wholesale action for all those who believed by faith. According to Got Questions, "*Asceticism* comes from the Greek word *askesis*, meaning "exercise, training, practice." Ascetics renounce worldly pleasures that distract from spiritual growth and enlightenment and live a life of abstinence, austerity, and extreme self-denial."¹ There were moments where God commanded or directed strict focus of living simply. This can be seen with Samson and the vow of the Nazarite where he was not to cut his hair, consume any fruit of the vine, and not touch any unclean/dead thing. This wasn't a widely prescribed set of rules for anyone to be used by God, but it appears that it wasn't only for Samson. Ascetic behavior would go to extremes to reject any physical comfort or pleasure and include things like enduring extreme heat or cold, extended fasting, self-mutilation (lashing with whips and cutting one's self), and also celibacy. It seems that this idea of asceticism was being forced upon the Colossians as a demand to become holy and set apart. Paul likely is including circumcision as an aspect of asceticism, since he sees it as mutilation.

Other prescribed and demanded actions of the false teachers include worshipping angels, prophet like behavior (visions), a personal devotion to insights and learning that the teacher had and would set him apart because others didn't, yet they were taught to pursue those types of things. The human mind conceiving of "higher" things without the aid of the Holy Spirit was a level of holiness that showed power and greatness. This effort to be made holy is rooted in works and is humanism, not Godly righteousness. Paul insinuates that they see themselves as the head of a body and the people under their teaching are for their purposes and are to become like them. Paul writes that these false teachers are "not holding fast to the Head" meaning they are not in Christ, but in themselves. They are their own God, and they respond to themselves alone. Paul continues that they are weak and starving with no true spiritual nourishment. He writes that being disconnected from the Head (Jesus Christ) they have no source of nourishment and are not knit within the Body of Christ. They may appear to grow and have a sense of spiritual wisdom and depth, but it is deception. They are not enjoying the growth that only comes from God and through the connection to Christ and His body. They are not in Christ and are not growing into Christlikeness.

Fully Alive and Living in Christ (v. 20-22)

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?

In Christ, the Christian knows that life only comes through being liberated in Jesus Christ (salvation) and that the things they used to live by are empty and worthless. The false teachings

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-asceticism-monasticism.html>

do not produce Christlikeness but make them captive to human works in an effort to become a better person. Paul uses an interesting phrase in this passage. In verse 20, Paul writes, “if you were still alive in the world” to denote that there are only 2 ways of living. A person is either alive in the world and submissive to its systems, ways, and life or they are alive in Christ and submit to His way of life. The Christian cannot find life in the systems of man and of the world. Therefore, the Christian will not submit to the human guidelines and instruction. An interesting thing in this set of verses is that Paul refers to human systems using commands that were given by God and used by Him to live by faith. He replaced those “shadow” things and gave His people the true thing these commands were reflecting. Jesus Christ has made all things clean and is the source of true sanctification. Being in Christ gives the Christian full life that the human demands cannot.

Don't Trust Empty Things (v. 23)

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.

Paul gives another warning to the readers in verse 23. The human demands that are trying to use the rescinded commands of God are trying to hijack God's words without God's power and work. Paul writes that this scheme sounds wise and looks like high religion but is completely powerless. These human works have no power to kill the flesh and set a person apart for God's work. The reality is that human works create a never ending struggle that depletes the body physically and spiritually and fosters sin and depending upon human works, which will kill the spirit and body. Paul pleads to not trust in empty things but only trust in Jesus Christ.

God's People are Sanctified by Christ Becoming Like Christ (SLIDE 7)

Shaped by His Work (SLIDE 8)

Galatians 2:20-21 ESV

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Trusting In His Work

Work on the Cross and Work in His People

He Gives and Takes Away to His Glory

Fully Relying Upon Him

Human work is weak/destructive

He is perfect and effective

Growing to Live in Him

His Strength

His Righteousness

His Truth

Knowing Truth from Lies/Deception

He Equips Us to Know Truth

He Causes Us to Crave His Truth

Producing Abundant Life (SLIDE 9)

Romans 6:20-23 ESV

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. **21** But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. **22** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Enduring Joy

True Freedom

Spiritual Wisdom

Deeply Connected

We Live Holy and Set Apart in Jesus Christ (SLIDE 10)

We reject dead ways and human work

We plead for and respond to God's work and help

We pursue Christ and Become Like Him

*** Sanctification Empowers Freedom**

Read

Romans 8:1-4 ESV (SLIDE 11)

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. **3** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 12)