

Colossians 2:18–23

<sup>18</sup> Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

<sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—

<sup>21</sup> “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”

<sup>22</sup> which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

<sup>23</sup> These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

### *Avoiding Spiritual Traps Colossians 2:16-23*

INTRO:

We listened before as the Apostle Paul warned us about being taken captive by those who would destroy our walk with Christ. In the paragraph before us, the Apostle Paul expounds for us the traps the false teachers lay to trap the Colossian believers and destroy their usefulness to God. The Apostle describes these traps by issuing three commands.

***I. Don't Pay Attention to Those Who Judge You for These Reasons (v. 15-17).***

***II. Don't Let Others Steal Your Reward (v. 18-19)***

***III. Don't Let the False Teachers Trick You into Majoring on the Minors (v. 20-23)***

***I. Don't Pay Attention to Those Who Judge You for These Reasons (v. 15-17).***

**Colossians 2:16–17** *“[Therefore], let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbath, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”*

A. What does the false teacher's tool box look like for taking believer's captive away from the realities in Christ? One major tool was judging them about their compliance with ***"the traditions of men"*** (Colossians 2:8).

B. Some try to find in this verse a parallel to Judaism. Although that fits their particular theological bent, there are problems with finding this in this passage. For example, while the Jews certainly were interested in food restrictions in the Old Testament, and certain feasts, and new moon celebrations, they did not have regulations on drink. In **verse 18**, these folks were also worshippers of angels. The Jews were not angel worshippers, but the pagans did worship them.

C. What then is Paul's point? The false teachers are those who judge according to ***"a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."*** (v.17) The reality and the important thing is the command in **verse 6**.

***"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."***

We are to have a real walk with the living Christ rather than a flashy but false walk dominated by obeying tradition for tradition's sake.

D. Let me give you an example to apply this. I have known several Seventh Day Adventist who tell me, *"If I want God to accept my worship I need to worship on Saturday."* This is exactly what kind of thing Paul wrote about.

## ***II. Don't Let Others Steal Your Reward (v. 18-19)***

**Colossians 2:18–19** ***"Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God."***

A. The second command spells out the threat if we let others dictate our activities not according to walking with the living Christ, but in doing specific tasks designed by the traditions of men. We can lose our rewards from Christ by elevating these things to the means of our being spiritual. In these verses we see clearly that Paul's focus is more than the Jewish idea.

1. Some seem to excel in their devotion to God by their commitment to self-denial. This false humility is a kind of self-denial that claims to make one closer to God. In the first centuries of Christianity this kind of activity abounded. They called themselves monks. They thought because they denied themselves simple pleasures they were closer to God.

2. Their worship involved a religious system built on angels. They are committed to doing things to serve other spiritual beings. A worship of Christ alone is seen as too unsophisticated and narrow.

3. This person who claims greater spiritual power and commitment is one who talks about his visions and experiences. ***“Going on in detail about visions” (v.18 ESV).*** We know these people today. I have heard many “prophecies” about what will happen that have never taken place. Beware of people who build their lives, walk with God, or spiritual growth to experience.

4. Last, Paul wrote, that those who would steal our reward are those who are ***“vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.” (v.18)*** Those who are claiming this higher level of spirituality are not humble at all but are arrogant. They are those who are “puffed up” by their fleshly mind and not by Christ Himself.

B. Verse 19 echoes much of what Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the church and how it should work in **Ephesians 4:11-15.**

***“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”***

This is the point. Are we holding fast to Christ alone, or are we measuring our spirituality by some elastic ruler?

### ***III. Don't Let the False Teachers Trick You into Majoring on the Minors (v. 20-23)***

**Colossians 2:20–23** ***“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”***

A. The first command was do not let false teachers judge you by man-made traditions. Second, do not let them steal your rewards by suckering you into false asceticism. Here finally, the principle is fleshed out.

B. The fact is we who know Christ as Savior are dead in Christ. Through our union with Jesus Christ, we have been crucified to the world.

**Romans 6:5-6** *“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*

This does not mean we have absolutely overcome sin in our lives, nor does it imply that we do not have to fight the principle of sin in our body (**Romans 7**). However, it means we can work on overcoming sin with the Lord’s help and we can please God.

C. However, there is still a temptation to think that the way to overcome sin is to publish a do’s and don’ts list, to *“subject yourselves to regulations—‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men.”* We can find ourselves listening to people rather than to God. These things look good but in fact are no help in our fight against the sin in our flesh.

How real is our walk with Christ to us? Do we see the difference in our lives because the Lord has saved us? Have things changed because Jesus came into our lives? The Lord Jesus and His Word are the only acceptable judges of our behavior.