



Grace Life Church
of Dallas
The doctrines of grace, the life of the Spirit, to the glory of God

Colossians 2:20-23

Appearances of Wisdom with No Value in Sanctification

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Colossians 2:20-23

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.

Warnings in Sanctification

- As true Christians: We have been *made alive* (v13), we have *received Christ Jesus the Lord* (v6), we have been *buried with him* (v12), we have been *raised with him through faith* (v12), our *record of debt with it's legal demands* has been *cancelled and nailed to the cross* (v14), and we are *complete (filled) in him* (v10). Now *abounding in thanksgiving* (v7) our great desire is to glorify God through obedience to His Word, walking in victory over sin, and progressively becoming more and more conformed into the image of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Goal of those being warned in v20-23 is *stopping the indulgence of the flesh*
- Paul gives some key insight which we can use to determine if we are on a Biblical path or humanistic path in our sanctification

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits (principles) of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—

Are there regulations/decrees that we, in Christ, are to submit to? Yes

- *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 fulfill them.”*
- *Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*
 - We do NOT look to the law of God as a means of attaining a right standing with God (Justified by grace through faith Rom 3:23, 4:3-5)
- *1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*
- *Where are these regulations coming from?*
 - *elemental spirits (principles) of the world* (origin is from world)
 - *according to human precepts and teachings*
 - Paul’s concern is “*if with Christ you died to these why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations*

Warnings in Sanctification

Regulations: v21 *“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”*

- The false teachers are teaching extra Biblical restrictions pertaining to things that go into the body as a means of *stopping the indulgence of the flesh* (v23)
- **Mark 7:1-9** *And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 7in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ 8You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” 9And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!*
- Not only are these man-made regulations that are extra Biblical, but they are v22 (*referring to things that all perish as they are used*)
 - 1 Corinthians 6:13 *“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”-and God will destroy both one and the other.* (Matthew 15:10-20)

Remember now, the goal is to stop the indulgence of the flesh through man-made extra Biblical restrictions regarding outward things that perish, and may not necessarily pertain to the heart

Warnings in Sanctification

If we are genuinely striving for holiness to please the Lord, why would we fall prey to these man-made means?

- *These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion*
 - Sound good, start with Biblical reasoning, make sense
 - There is something in each of us that is drawn to self-made religion
 - It's tangible (We can get our arms around it, we can measure it, and we can be in control, not relying on faith/Christ (but on self))
 - *(Promoting) asceticism*: false humility (pride) home-made piety
 - *(Promoting) and severity to the body*: denying oneself liberties because it has the appearance of holiness
- Can we see why a true Christian striving for holiness would be susceptible to fall into these man-made means to holiness (See next slide)

Romans 14 :1-4 *As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 4Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

What does have value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh?

- Knowing who you are in Christ's finished work (justified) and abiding in Him (John 15), reckoning yourself dead to sin and alive to God (Rom 6:11), not presenting your members sin (Rom 6:13), looking to the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13), hiding His word in your heart (Ps 119:11), renewing your mind and taking thoughts captive (Rom 12, 2 Cor 10), thinking on & seeking things above (Phil 4/Col 3), guarding your heart (Prov 4)

All of this isn't to say there aren't laws to obey and self-denial (Ch 3-4), but it is to say we need to be careful not to fall in either ditch on the path of truth

As a church, we need to be mature enough to discuss our convictions, matters of conscience and the practical living out of Scripture. We need to be able to approach each other over concerns (lawful/profitable), but we must be careful we are not doing what the false teachers in Colossae were promoting:

In my desire to grow in Christ-likeness and my desire for the body to grow in Christ-likeness:

- Am I looking to or promoting regulations that are extra-biblical as law?
- Regarding areas of conscience: Am I despising those who abstain, or passing judgment on those who partake? Rom 14
- Or am I pointing other to abide in Jesus Christ (His power, His Word, His Finished Work) and Biblical means of sanctification?
- Am I being patient, gentle, gracious and loving with them all? (1 Thess 5:14, Gal 6:1, Eph 4:15)