



Colossians 2:20-23 & Romans 14/15

Unity Among Diversity in Maturity

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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.

Review

Context: We are dealing with sanctification here not justification

- *V23 they are of no value in stopping in the indulgence of the flesh*

If they are of no value, why would any Christian be tempted to follow these people?

- *V23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body*

What kind of things were being taught?

- *V20-21 regulations, “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”*
- *Where did they get these regulations? V22 Human precepts and teachings (v20 elemental spirits/principles of the world)*
- *People were setting up extra-Biblical regulations and calling people to submit to them as a means of stopping the indulgence of the flesh*
- *We noted that the Pharisees were known for starting with a Biblical truth/command, and adding tradition (human precepts/teachings) and holding fast to them as commandments (Matthew 15)*
- *What is Paul’s main warning? The teachings being put forth were human in origin (tradition), & of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh*

Pervasive Concern for Paul

In every church there are mature/weak Christians, and the potential for issues/division to arise in our pursuit of Christ-likeness is prevalent in every church.

- Paul addresses these types of issues in his letter to the church in Rome (Ch 14-15), Corinth (Ch 8-9), Galatia (Ch 3, 5), & Colossae
- We must all individually be diligently pursuing Christ-likeness, but we must also be careful in our pursuit that we remain Biblical & united

Maintaining unity amongst our diversity in maturity: Romans 14/15

- **No one is promoting careless/worldly living: Galatians 5:13** *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.* (1 Peter 2:16)
- There are two Christians in the church Paul is addressing here: 14:1 *weak in the faith*, 15:1 *strong* (in the faith)
- Both are pursuing Christ-likeness: 14:6 honor & thanks to the Lord

Striving for unity amongst our diversity in maturity

In a parallel text (1 Cor 8-Food offered to idols) Paul gives us insight as to why the weaker brother is weaker: v6-7 *yet for us (stronger) there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*⁷ However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. (Lack of knowledge/understanding, former association/struggles/idols)

What are these differences pertaining to? End v1 *opinions* (Doubtful disputes)

- Matters of conscience and personal conviction (not clear commands)
- **Warning:** The weaker in faith believe they are dealing commands but in reality they are dealing with convictions regarding commands

Paul understands that we will have differing opinions (convictions, matters of conscience), so what is he concerned about?

- How we treat each other with our differing opinions (potential division)
- Look what is happening in the church at Rome

Striving for unity amongst our diversity in maturity

Among the strong in faith:

- V1 *As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions*
- V3 *let not the one who eats (strong) despise the one who abstains*
 - Instead of despising (making no account of/creating classes) the weaker brother his opinions, welcome him (befriend him) but not to quarrel
- Why should the strong welcome the weak and not despise?
 - End v3 *For God has welcomed him*
 - What is Paul getting at here? Our relationships in the church should not be defined by who shares and holds our personal convictions and matters of conscience, but rather based on who has been welcomed by God through Christ (this promotes unity among the strong and weak)

Among the weak in faith:

- V3 *let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the who eats*
- Why not judge? V4 *who 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.*

Striving for unity amongst our diversity in maturity

When the weaker Christian is no longer judging and the stronger Christian is no longer despising but welcoming, unity is being sought for the glory of God

- Now Paul gives more instruction on how we are to handle these issues:
- *V13 Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother..v19 let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up-building.*
- No body should live against their conscience (v22-23) but know that through growth in understanding/knowledge our conscience may change.
- We must be guarding against making areas of conscience and personal conviction the basis by which we judge others (we are not to judge others this way)
- We are striving to make the basis of our relationships not who affirms my personal convictions and matters of conscience (and thus despising the weaker brother/sister who disagrees with me) but rather because God has welcomed them, we will welcome them