



## Colossians 2:16-19

<sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup>Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, <sup>[a]</sup> puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup> 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.

As we are reminded from last week, Paul is addressing the contextual issues of the time pertaining to the keeping of some of the Jewish traditions, such as circumcision, the feasts, and dietary restrictions. Many of these were promulgated by the Judaizers (converted Jews who believed it was necessary to keep the Jewish customs and practices, especially those found in the Law of Moses.).

Paul begins verse 16 with “therefore” to remind his listeners of his earlier statements in verses 13-15 that although they were dead because of their sins you have now been made alive in Christ, Jesus. You have, as His precious children received forgiveness of sins by Christ’s death on the cross. Paul continues to exhort them, “let no one pass judgment” but instead let us encourage, come alongside, and speak truth in love to one another. For the converted Jews, in particular, this was a difficult concept to understand as they had been taught for centuries that the rules and regulations were the only way to have a relationship with God. The Law of Moses, which was for the Jews the only way had become an idol in many ways. We know from Matthew 5:17-20 that Jesus can as the complete fulfillment of the Law:

“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. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

In verse 17, Paul is reminding his audience that all these practices were precursors to Jesus and have been completely and totally fulfilled in Him. Paul was concerned that the church was being pulled away from Christ by those teaching other practices, ways of thinking and being, cultural beliefs and practices, so he reminds the church at Colossae, and you and I today, do not let anyone “disqualify you” with anything that is not-Christ centric. The church at Colossae and you and I have to be on guard, not because we will lose our salvation (if we have genuinely professed Christ) but so we do not wander astray and become pulled towards our flesh and our own beliefs and those of others, by the people and ways of this world “asceticism, visions, mystics, sensuality etc.” Instead, we should “hold fast to the Head” being “nourished and knit together” in Christ Jesus. This will lead to growth that “is from God” which is Paul’s main concern for the church that we grow together in Christ.

Consider the following:

1. “He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12). The blood sacrifices of animals were no longer necessary.
2. “The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever” (Hebrews 7:23-24). There was no longer a need for priests, as Jesus was the only High Priest.
3. There was no need for a physical temple. As Jesus was the representation of the temple. “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. . . . But the hour is

- coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:21, 23). See also, ““destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ . . . He [Jesus] was speaking about the temple of his body” (John 2:19, 21) and Matthew 18:20, “for where two or three are gathered in my [Jesus’s] name, there am I among them.”
4. The food laws had been fulfilled in Christ. “[Jesus] said to them, . . . ‘Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him?’ . . . (Thus, he declared all foods clean)” (Mark 7:18-19).

In conclusion, here are three takeaways from today’s lesson:

- 1) Let us remember not to judge (Matthew 7:1-5, “judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye”) the practices of one another but at the same time be mindful that we are to speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:15 “rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ”).
- 2) Ask God to reveal practices in your life that are not Christ-centric and where you may have wondered astray and have attached yourself to forms of idolatry.
- 3) Let us choose to come together as one body in Christ and to hold each other up in love, prayer, and encouragement as we grow together.