



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/self.

Last week we looked at verses 2:16-19 where we were reminded that the Colossians were facing challenging times - pulled in various directions of false teachings. We too, are faced with externalities that want to pull us away from the cause of Christ. Contextually, the church at Colossae was particularly challenged by the Judaizers, those who advocated that if you came to Christ you still needed to abide by the regulations of the Law (such as, outward circumcision, dietary restrictions). We know, as New Testament believers – as Christ-followers, that we are free in Christ and that our choices and decisions are driven by the exhortation of Paul to be imitators of Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2) not by what cultures deems appropriate or what tradition demands. What are some of the forces in your own life that are pulling you towards tradition, culture, legalism, etc. rather than Christ? What idols can you identify in your life that you have given authority to verses authority to Christ? As Paul is reminding the Colossians to remain steadfast and hold tightly to Him, Who is the Head (2:19), let us choose to do so even more fervently in these times of uncertainty. We must choose to be firmly rooted and grounded in Christ’s Word daily to remain stable and unwavering especially during times of fear and upheaval. Remember, “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Paul is encouraging the church at Colossae and you and me, to grow forward. “If you have died” is not a statement of “if,” in a doubting, hesitant way – it is an ‘action’ if – you have died so do something with the realization of your death in Christ. If we have professed Christ as Lord and Savior, then we have died to self and have been born again through the power of the resurrection in us into newness of life. We know that through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, we have been given new life and forgiveness of our sins. Paul is affirming the fact that the church of Colossae, the Christ-followers, have died, so then - why are you engaging in non-Christ-like practices, behaviors, thoughts, and action. As ones who have made a choice to follow after Christ; there are requirements upon us, as His beloved children. God desires obedience to Him above all else. If you have chosen to live Christ and you are not of the world – have been made alive and new in Christ - why are you allowing these elementary principles of the world to control you? Why are we allowing worldly wisdom and conditioned behaviors to rule us and to drive our decisions, influence our actions, and taint our thoughts? We know that it is easy to be drawn away by the world because of our flesh/self and its desires and that is why following after Christ and walking in the Spirit requires such intentionality – so as to not find ourselves “off roading.” This does not mean that we are to be disobedient and not follow governmental regulations even Jesus says in Matthew 22:21, “therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” But we ought not be tugged by other people’s opinions or traditions - let us choose to look to Christ first.

Paul is saying you are coming out of the world and Christ has presented a new model which is - Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the law- and we are now able to walk in His freedom that He so graciously gave to us by His death on the Cross. Why do we allow ourselves or choose to be given over to those traditions just because our culture tells us to? Let us choose to appropriately step back and say, I am a child of God, is this what God would want of me? Do not let the flesh/self deceive you. Check your motives. Learning to surrender is not an act of the flesh/self but rather an act of the Holy Spirit and God desires us to be his surrendered vessels to the fullness of Him in us? What legalistic laws do we feel have been placed upon you or that you have placed upon yourself? The sanctified life is not a legalistic check the box type of life. Paul states in 2:22 (providing clarity to 3:21, “referring to things

that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?) reminding both the Colossians and us that the things of this world are temporal and will all perish; yet, Christ will remain forever.

Wise choices will be made when fully surrendered to Christ not the suggestions, opinions, or philosophies of man and that is what Paul is referencing in these verses. Practice caution as to what you take in from the world – choosing instead to infuse your mind with God’s Word and digest it so that God’s truth makes its way to your heart. Paul concludes in 2:23 the vernacular of the Christian Life Institute,, that “strands of legitimacy” will exist in this world - meaning on the surface the pulls and draws will seem harmless and well-intended - but the issue becomes what is the intent and motive for listening to, seeking after, and following through with those actions? Is it to serve ourselves or is it to please God? The bottom line is our flesh/self is not our friend. Flesh/self will lead us astray every day and every moment and we need to recognize our own susceptibilities because these worldly strategies do not buffet the flesh/self. Paul is stating it does not matter if you keep the dietary regulations, circumcision regulations, or fill in the blank for today. None of these have any value against fleshly indulgence. So do not give in to these desires, do not give Satan a foothold - because each time we do we are taking a small step away from Christ. Christ does not ever move as He is ever faithful, but we too have the calling to be faithful. So, let us choose together to heed Paul’s warning to not indulge the flesh/self because the flesh/self does not work - it is “of no value.” What does work is the power of God’s Word and the Holy Spirit in us which allows us to be victorious overcomers in Christ!