

Col Ch 2 Vs 16-23

Not Regimen, But Relationship

Vs 16-23

From the flashing yellow lights that signal a school zone, to the deer crossing signs, to the skull and cross bones on a bottle of poison, warnings are apart of everyday life. We teach children to heed certain warnings, as adults we need constant reminders not to grow accustomed to them, because warnings can be a matter of life and death.

The same is true regarding spiritual matters, you remember that Moses warned the children of Israel prior to their entering into the Promised Land saying, “*beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*” He went on saying, “*You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.*” and On and on he went, warning the people, Jesus would often say, “beware of” and then He would go on to issue a warning, maybe concerning false prophets, or scribes and Pharisees, or covetousness, or any number of things.

In this section of the book of Col Paul has been warning the believers concerning their relationship to the Lord (and who He is for them, in them and through them), vs all of these other things that these heretical individuals were seeking to ensnare them by. and In the section that’s before us he tackles 3 key issues that are still a danger to the believer today. Now, he’s already dealt with intellectualism, (philosophies (including psychology) and other worldly systems of thought). and Now he deals with legalism in vs 16-17, mysticism in vs 18-19, and asceticism in vs20-23.

Now with this 1st category of legalism, we’re kind of in the middle of that one in that he began speaking about what the true circumcision is in vs 11 and then he began to speak about the law in vs 14 and. But now he gets into a few of the specifics that they were being confronted with as it pertained to the Law, and unveils the fallacy of them.

Vs16-17

Now this word “So” or in your OKJV “Therefore” is important because that’s the word that ties this statement to the previous Vs’s, since you’ve received the circumcision of Christ made with out hands and have put off the body of the sins of the flesh, and the things pertaining to it. Since the handwriting of requirements that was against you (that being the Law) that was contrary to you has been wiped out, having been nailed to the cross, bringing you now under the dispensation of grace through Christ rather than Law. and Since Jesus has disarmed, or stripped any and all powers and principalities of any and all authority and power over you whereby they might bring you into bondage, “let no one judge you”, or measure your spirituality... (Finish vs).

These were all things that pertained to the law, and yet I find that there are still people today who want to sort of measure you up by a certain legal code that they may seek to keep that you don't. As it were still seeking to keep the law, certain foods that could and couldn't be eaten, "Oh you eat pork!" Or "Well, I don't eat meat." Now, if for certain health reasons you don't eat certain foods that's one thing, but what we do and don't eat have absolutely no bearing on our relationship with God whatsoever. Jesus made it absolutely clear that it's not what goes into your mouth that makes you unclean, whether it be certain meats or whatever. It's what comes out of your mouth that defiles you, because the things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and these are the things (Jesus said) that defile a man. *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man."* But as far as foods are concerned, food is for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy them both.

You remember Peter struggled with this concept regarding certain clean and unclean foods, and one day he was up on this roof just hanging out waiting for supper (that was sort of like front porches for us). and He fell into this trance and saw this great sheet descending out of heaven and it was bound @ all 4 corners. and It was full of all these unclean animals that a good Jewish boy wouldn't be caught dead eating, and he heard the Lord say, *"Rise Peter, kill and eat."* and This happened 3 times and he said, *"Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."* and The Lord spoke to him and said, *"What God has cleansed you must not call common."* In other words, let not man reject that which God accepts.

Of course ultimately God was teaching him a lesson concerning His bringing the gentiles into the sheepfold, but the point is that under grace the law concerning certain foods no longer applies. and In both Romans and 1st Cor Paul deals with this subject of certain foods that were rejected under the law that are accepted under grace, let's look together at 1Tim ch 4 (vs 1-5).

So contrary to godliness, it's actually a demonic doctrine that would cause someone to seek to be elevated in righteousness by certain diets that they keep and meats they don't eat. Why, because it belittles the work of the cross, and the sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ on your behalf. So let no one judge you in food. "Or in drink" some people gasp at the fact that you'd drink anything with caffeine in it, again don't be fooled by their self-righteous regimen, trust in the Lord, He's made you as righteous as you can be. Granted that you're not perfected yet in practical righteousness (we all still mess up from time to time) but your positional righteousness can be no greater than that which Christ has imputed to you. and Our works to try and accomplish a righteous standard before God is but filthy rags (the bible says). "Regarding a festival", Christmas and Easter aren't any more of a holy day than is any other day, in Christ everyday is the same, we should seek to be pleasing to God and living our lives for Him daily, not setting aside a certain day to make a special effort.

New moons or Sabbaths, Helen G. White, the founder of 7th Day Adventism actually taught that those who worship on Sunday are guilty of taking the mark of the beast and doomed to hell. and Paul is simply saying, “Hey, don’t let anyone put these legalistic head trips on you like that.” Because all of these things that pertained to the Law, eating, drinking, festivals and Sabbath’s, they were all just shadows, they were foreshadows of that which was to come in Christ.

If I went away on a trip for a while and upon my return as I was heading toward my door having arrived home, and my wife was waiting there on the porch and the sun was to my back and my shadow was cast before me. and Upon seeing my shadow she ran and fell to her knees and sought to embrace my shadow, that would cause some concern in me, I’d have to say, “Hun, there’s something shady about this. Get up! The reality is right here, don’t embrace the shadow it only speaks of the substance that’s following it, the fulfillment of what it testifies of, you can embrace me.”

But that’s what Paul is saying they’re doing, they’re embracing the shadows but the real deal is in Christ; He’s the embodiment, or the substance of all these things. The writer of Heb tells us that the law was a shadow of good things to come (Heb 10:1). Jesus was the fulfillment of the Passover, all the festivals of the Law were pointing to Him, He’s the bread of life, He, said if any man thirst let him come to Me and drink.

He is our perpetual Sabbath, Jesus said, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* These things only testified of the reality of Christ, but once the reality is here the shadow has served its purpose, it’s told us the reality was on the way.

The 4th ch of Heb devotes a big chunk to the fact that it’s in Jesus that we find rest, He is our Sabbath, and besides all of these things, the Mosaic Law was never ascribed to gentiles in the 1st place, and nowhere in the NT will you find the Mosaic Law applied to the NT believer. As a matter of fact in Acts 15 Peter stood up when there was an argument over this very thing and said, *“why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”* and As far as any sort of legal code goes for the NT believer, this is the best the NT has to offer, (again there in Acts 15) when the dispute was settled, the counsel of the early church was to, *“abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.”*

So beware of legalism and people seeking to bring you into bondage through certain diets in order to elevate your spirituality. Now, I believe that it's necessary to admonish you in the area of love vs liberty, don't stumble weaker believers by your liberty, you're to love them and be careful to build them up, not tear them down. But no amount of abstinence from pork or red meats or caffeinated drinks will make anyone righteous or holy.

Vs18-19

Paul's warning regarding mysticism, the worship of angels, or spirit beings, intruding into those things which they haven't even seen, or have no clue over and acting real spiritual about it. Placing credence in visions or dreams even though they may contradict the clear teaching of God's Word, don't be fooled and ripped off by people who seem real spiritual and promote themselves as those who walk real close to God, but in reality they purport things as fact that they don't even have a clue about.

Paul is saying don't let anyone rip you off of what God wants to bless your life with throughout eternity, by means of such things. False humility, seeking mediation between themselves and God through means other than Jesus Christ These people would teach that, "You know, we're not really worthy to go to God (in their false humility) so we pray to angels who in turn deliver our petitions to God." Now you may not know of anyone today who does such things, though they're still around I have no doubt. But how about praying to certain saints, or to Mary in order to get your petitions to God because you aren't worthy to take them there yourself so, talk to this saint or that saint, or if you're in a big bind talk to Mary and she'll tell Jesus. After all she's His mother and what Son wouldn't listen to his mother? So she'll tell Him, and He'll take it to the Father, that's absolute heresy, seeking multiple mediators between you and God when the bible says in 1 Tim 2:5-6, "*There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all.*"

Jesus said that He was the way, the truth and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father but by Him and Him alone, no other saint, or Mary the mother of Jesus can mediate between you and God. and There's no biblical support whatsoever for praying to *anything* or *anyone* else but God and God alone by the means of Jesus Christ You can take your needs straight to the throne room of God, Heb 10:19-22 says this, "*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*"

You know, there are a lot of people that want to intrude into your life and instruct you in things of which they know nothing about. The scriptures speak quite a bit about that, 1 Tim 1:7 speaks of people, “*desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.*” In other words they’re clueless, they’ve done just about everything with the scriptures other than rightly divide them. and Then they try to stand on some concept of theirs that they’ve pulled out of context and invented some heretical doctrine and then they try to speak it into your life like it’s biblical fact. They’ve intruded into those things that they’re clueless about.

In 1 Tim 6:4-5 we read about religious individuals who are, “*proud, knowing nothing, but are obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth.*” and Do you know what causes people to be this way? The simple fact that they don’t have their Head screwed on straight, they’ve not held fast to the Head (vs 19 finish).

It’s vital to the Christian experience or life, that we hold fast and stay focused on the Head (Jesus Christ) Be careful of getting involved in a group who’s only interest seems to be what the bible means *to you* and then they express what this passage means *to me*. and So the supposition, or the theory is that whatever it means to you is cool and whatever it means to me is cool. That can teeter into mysticism and fall into a cultic mentality in a quick, because the bottom line is what a certain passage means to me, may not be what that passage means *at all*. The question isn’t what does the bible mean to me, it’s what does the bible mean—period!

If you don’t agree with what it means that’s too bad for you, you need to repent and get in line with what it means because what it means is absolute, it doesn’t bend to fit our whims and desires and mean what we want to make it mean for us. That’s why we strive to *rightly* divide the Word of Truth, and hold fast, or cling tightly to the Head lest we get messed up in the head and go askew. Because Jesus is He who nourishes us, knits us together and grows us with the increase that is from God.

Pay attention to these words “joints” and “ligaments” Paul speaking of the church, the body of Christ, and making an illustration that compares it to a physical body, and the isolated context of this vs is on the growth of the body. From Christ comes everything that every Christian needs, holding fast to the Head is for every believer. and God wants to nourish us, and knit us together and cause us to grow, but we need to be willing to allow God to join us, and nurture us and knit us (listen) together with others. Nowhere in the scriptures will you find support for Christian isolation or withdrawal from the fellowship of believers, as a matter of fact it says the man that isolates himself seeks *his own* desires, and rages against all wise counsel, or judgment.

That's one reason I'm excited about the home fellowships, because in them you'll find yourselves being joined and knit together and my prayer is that it's a result of holding fast not to the group leader, but to the Head Jesus Christ

But think of it like this, how would your person body function if each of its members weren't joined and knit together? That is, deeply intertwined in relationship, you wouldn't function well if that weren't a reality; any member of your physical body that wasn't joined and knit to the others would be in great trouble.

That's exactly the way it is in the body of Christ, we're to be joined and knit together through Christ, and nourished, what we find in Christ we're to pass on to others in the body so that they might benefit from it as well. and Here Paul says that this nourishing and knitting together of the body takes place by "joints and ligaments."

In the physical arena, every joint of your body supplies something of benefit to your entire body. The various joints in my arm individually and corporately supply my whole body food for nourishment, the joints in my legs, my knees, and ankles, and hips supply mobility to my whole body. Now, they work together but simultaneously work independently to supply my body's needs.

So even as a joint in the physical body is where one member of my body relates to another member of my body to function together for the benefit of the whole body, the same is true in the body of Christ. When 1 member is willing to relate to another member, to function together, under the Head, for the benefit of all. Any 1 Christian that's willing to work together or relate with another Christian, creating a spiritual joint under the Headship of Jesus Christ for the benefit of the body, that joint will be an avenue of blessing and provision for the entire body, a supply for the whole body. These are joints, now what about ligaments? What are they? Well what's a physical ligament? They're the bands that hold the joint in place, if you didn't physical ligaments, in your physical body, then your joints would pop out at the least amount of pressure, now sometimes we still get joints that pop out of place. But if you have healthy ligaments then it takes considerable pressure to pop a joint out of place.

Now we know what joints are in the body of Christ, but what are the ligaments that hold those joints in place? Strong bonds of Christ like love, so that what that person does *to me*, or fails to do *for me* doesn't pop me out of joint in my relationship with that person. and Yet throughout the body of Christ there is spiritual disjointedness abounding, now unjointed Christians are another subject, Christians that just won't build relationships with other Christians period, being completely out of God's will for their lives in that arena, because we're not to be just a bunch of isolated renegades, or lone rangers following after the Good Shepherd, we're a body.

But so many who get jointed, or related, get so easily disjointed, “Hey, why aren’t getting together with that sister or that brother like you used to in order to pray or just go through the Word?” “Well, they went out to eat with so and so and didn’t even invite me, who needs friends like that?” and POP, you’re out of joint, boy what a major trial that was, if I were you I wouldn’t talk to them for the next 20 yrs. You’ve popped out of joint under the least little pressure, or “Why don’t you go down to that church anymore? You used to say that that was the best place in town to go.” “Well, I smiled at the Pastor one time and he acted like he didn’t even see me, if that’s the kind of shepherd he is then I’m out of there.” “Or I said something to him and he didn’t even respond.” and POP, you’re out of joint, “I mean, no believer should have to put up with that.” Of course you didn’t know that the pastor was going through the greatest agony of his whole Christian life that week and it was nothing short of a miracle that he was able to take the pulpit much less think and be alert and relate.

The least little thing so often pops us out of joint, wouldn’t it be better if people were to say, “Hey, why are you still going to that church?” Or, “Why are you still hanging out with that guy?” “I know what he did to you, or failed to do for you.” “Yeah, but I love him, or I love her, he’s my brother, she’s my sister, that’s not going to dictate over our relationship I love that person, I’m for that person, I’m praying for that person.”

You see, no popping out of joint, but rather bound together by strong bonds of Christ like love, that’s how the body is meant to work, and God will grow that body with the increase that is Him. There’s all kinds of carnal church growth out there today, hey, they can have it, we want the increase that comes from God that results from a healthy body joined, nurtured, and knit together by believers willing to relate and work together through strong bonds of Christ like love.

Vs20-23

What’s he talking about here? Asceticism, which is to lead a life of rigorous self denial, poverty equals spirituality, the body is evil so starve it, punish it, torture it so as to seek an acceptance or a righteous standing before God. Don’t do this, don’t touch that, it’s incredibly negative.

But God would have your relationship with Him be one that is positive, one that’s enjoyed and full of life. Now, I’m not saying that there’s no place for self-denial, but these people take it to an extreme that was never intended, to where the focus is on the physical and not on the heart. and They wear long faces and show their misery and somehow through that seek to exude holiness.

Jesus said when you fast, don’t be that way, wash your face, put on some cologne, don’t let people know what you’re doing, or else you have your reward. But if it’s between you and God then He who sees in the secret will reward you openly. But if you get to the root, ascetics worship themselves, they pride themselves on their self-imposed discipline, don’t fall into that

trap; yeah they look real spiritual through intellectualism, or legalism, or mysticism or asceticism.

The fact is, it's of no value against the indulgence of the flesh, to the contrary these things feed the flesh, the flesh is subtle, and it's wicked. and To try to do things in the flesh, through the efforts of the flesh to eradicate the flesh, just won't work, as Jeremiah would put it, these things are just broken cisterns that can hold no water. We're to hold fast to Christ, and guard against a regimen of legalism however it may surface itself, and live in a simple love relationship with Him.

If you're here this morning and you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ You've never invited Him into your heart for whatever reason, maybe you thought that coming to Christ was synonymous with a big list of do's and don'ts and religious rituals. Maybe you've been miss-led by some "super spiritual mystic" that just freaked you out, or it could be any # of things. But today if you're willing I'd like to introduce you not to a religious regimen, but a person, the person of Jesus Christ and You can begin a relationship that centers on love with Him. He laid down His life on the cross in order to make that possible for each and every one of us. and If you're willing, He is able to forgive you of every sin you've ever committed and make you brand new. I don't care where you've been, what you've done, or where you're at today in your life. God can give you a new lease on life, but it's only through Jesus Christ