

"The Application"

Part 3

Colossians 2:16-23

Introduction: For the past two weeks we have been looking at Paul's application of the finished work of Jesus Christ. He was addressing a teaching that the heretics had carried into the church at Colossae and that teaching was that certain practices are required to make you more holy. In this application we have looked at two teaching that Paul has addressed.

1. Legalism

Notice Colossians 2:16-17

Legalism refers to a teaching of man-made rules and regulations as the standard for spirituality. The specific rules and restrictions may be different today, but the error is the same. People come into the body of Christ and tell you how wrong it is to watch secular movies, to play cards, to wear make-up, to listen to secular music, to dance, and on and on. These individuals are not only convinced that these practices are wrong but consider it their duty to judge you as unspiritual because you do them!

Notice a writer's statement about legalism.

Legalism needlessly alienates non-Christians. It misrepresents God as a Cosmic Killjoy instead of the Giver of Abundant Life. It implies that we have to clean ourselves up morally before we can come to Christ, instead of coming to him as we are and allowing him to change us from the inside out. It creates ghettos of finger-pointers instead of people like Jesus, who never compromised morally, but loved lost people and became known as "the friend of sinners."

Notice the Words of Jesus to the legalists of His day.

Matthew 23:27-28

²⁷ *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

²⁸ *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

Legalism does nothing to cleanse the heart. It only gives the appearance that someone is spiritual when in reality they are consumed with a judgmental attitude. Let me show you something that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:1-5

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

² *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

³ *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

⁴ *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

⁵ *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

This passage was addressed to the religious leaders and their legalistic attitudes.

2. Mysticism.

Notice Colossians 2:18-19

This is what we looked at last week. Legalism is about the external and mysticism is all about the internal and namely the emotions. Mysticism is focused upon feelings. A mystic will put more emphasis upon feelings than they will on the Truth of God's Word. These people will; accept experience as truth over what the Bible teaches.

Notice Colossians 2:18 again.

In the church at Colossae these false teachers were teaching that no man was worthy to approach God and therefore they believed that they would need to go through the angels to get to Him. They were teaching angel worship which the Bible clearly condemns.

Revelation 22:8-9

⁸ *And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.*

⁹ *Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*

The Bible teaches that as believers we can enter the presence of God at any time.

Hebrews 4:15-16

¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 10:16-22

¹⁶ This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

¹⁷ And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

¹⁸ Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

²⁰ By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

²¹ And having an high priest over the house of God;

²² Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Jesus Christ has made a way for us, the common people, to enter into the presence of God.

The consequences of getting caught up in this false teaching are twofold.

A. Being deceived.

Paul tells them "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Notice what Vine writes.

"A translation which is closer to the proper meaning of the word, as given above, is "let no man decide for or against you" (without any notion of a prize). This is in close agreement with the preceding exhortation, "let no man judge you," and the meaning is "do not give yourselves up to the judgment and decision of any man"."

The idea here is that they were not to allow these false teachers to lead them down a path which had no spiritual value. They were to use critical thinking based upon the Truth that

Paul had given them. They were not just to believe what the heretics were saying but instead they were to use their own ability to choose the Truth. The practice that the heretics offered was one of absolutely no value and therefore there would be no spiritual reward at the Judgment Seat.

Let us understand that there are many under the umbrella of Christianity today who function on emotion most of the time. In church it is all about the music that plays on the emotions. But the truth of the matter is that this is all "fluff" and there is no spiritual value in it. There are churches today in which emotional music is played and the people stand with hands raised as they sway back and forth. These people claim to be on another level spiritually speaking. But most of this is all emotion and has no spiritual value and I will go so far as to say that God is not in it. This is mysticism.

B. No spiritual growth.

Notice Colossians 2:19

This supports what I said in the last statement. Mysticism is not about holding tightly to Jesus Christ. Those in mysticism have let go of the Head and that is Jesus. Jesus is the Source of all spiritual growth. When the Bible is pushed aside and the glorification of Jesus is pushed out of the church then the entire service is nothing but "fluff."

John 15:1-5

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

² *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

³ *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

⁴ *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

⁵ *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

So, when a believer gets involved in legalism and mysticism they decapitate their Christian life by cutting off the Head, thus they remove the Source of growth and wisdom.

Now Paul moves on to the third area to avoid.

3. Asceticism

Notice Colossians 2:20-21

What is "asceticism?"

Columbia Encyclopedia gives this information on asceticism,

"The rejection of bodily pleasures through sustained self-denial and self-mortification, with the objective of strengthening spiritual life. Asceticism has been common in most major world religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity: all of these have special ascetic cults or ascetic ideals. The most common ascetic practice is fasting, which is used for many purposes—to produce visions, as among the Crow; to mourn the dead, as among various African peoples; and to sharpen spiritual awareness, as among the early Christian saints. More extreme forms have been flogging and self-mutilation, usually intended to propitiate or reach accord with a god."

Notice Colossians 2:20-23 again.

Asceticism was the practice of denying the body certain pleasures. Today it is denying the body marriage, sexual relations, certain foods and the list goes on. In some places men are separated from the world and when they have an immoral thought, they will through themselves on a thorn bush in an attempt to keep those thoughts away. Asceticism is simply an attempt to punish or bludgeon the flesh into submission. The flesh will never be bludgeoned into submission.

Romans 7:18-21

¹⁸ *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

¹⁹ *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

²⁰ *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

²¹ *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

Notice Colossians 2:23 again.

No matter how much we "starve" the flesh it will never be satisfied. In other words, no matter how much we make the flesh suffer it will never become righteous. The sin nature will be with us as long as we live.

How then is the flesh kept in submission?

Notice Colossians 2:20 again.

Here is the key to victory over the flesh. We are DEAD with Jesus Christ. In other words, we have been crucified with Christ.

Romans 6:3-11

³ *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

⁴ *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

⁵ *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

⁶ *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

⁷ *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

⁸ *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

⁹ *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

¹⁰ *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

¹¹ *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

It is the cross and the cross only that the flesh will submit to. We are to walk by faith in this Truth. We have all we need to have victory over the flesh. Rules, regulations, and bludgeoning the flesh will never give you victory. It will only come when you realize that you are crucified with Christ and the old man has been stripped of his power.

Conclusion:

Galatians 2:19-20

¹⁹ *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

²⁰ *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*