

Colossians 2:16-19

16 Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. 17 These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

Colossians is another letter to a church in trouble. The church was a Gentile congregation. Therefore, the problem that they encountered was internal, among fellow Christians. The letter addresses a problem of doctrine. Throughout the history of the Christian church, doctrine is the most significant thing. The congregation in Colossae was established on correct teaching. All of their teaching was based on who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and what our response is to be. It is very important to stay true to the word that has been revealed to us by God. We do not have a full understanding of what the problem was; we only have this letter which is one response to the problem. All we can claim to know with any degree of certainty is that the congregation was being led astray by some preaching and teaching that was not focused on Jesus.

One theory is that there was an infiltration of other religions that emphasized human doctrine, thinking, opinions, and traditions. There could have been an infiltration of philosophy, sophisticated Greek thought and ideas about wisdom. People were seeking to understand the world and themselves within it. There was a strong desire to make sense of the world using reason. Ancient philosophy is based on imagination and speculation and the Christian religion is based on reality. There was also the case of misguided teaching that insisted that it was necessary to become a Jew first before anyone can become a Christian. They tried to enforce the observance of Jewish laws, circumcision, food restrictions, and the observance of holy days. However, Jewish traditions and rituals do not bring salvation.

We could look deeper into each point of Scripture and analyze what it means about food and drink, festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths. However, the point is not each of these symbols; the main point is to stay focused on Christ. What is important is Jesus; who he is, what he has done, and our response is to him. Our response is not rituals and traditions such as Jewish laws, practices, kosher food and drink, and festivals. Human traditions have nothing to do with authentic faith. Christ has defeated all of these powers on the cross. Nothing is superior to Jesus the Christ. He is God in the flesh. The point is to focus on Christ and do not let humans mislead you with doctrine that is not centered on Christ.

When you look at the big picture you see the love of God. This love is poured out to us in abundance. God gives the very best of God's love. This puts us and the worship of God in another realm. This opens up a vast sphere of understanding God. We have a new covenant based on love. With love you don't need to prove yourself with physical deeds. Love extends beyond any physical realm. I'll use a hypothetical father and son relationship as an example. One son is insecure in his relationship with his father and does not think he has his father's approval. So, the son washes the fathers car, mows the

grass, takes out the trash and does a lot of chores on a regular basis to try to gain his father's blessing. The other son realizes that the father already loves him and that it has nothing to do with all of the things he could do to seek his blessing. The love is already there. He knows that you do not have to do anything to win the love of the father, you only have to accept fathers love. Then all of the things that you do are done out of appreciation.

The love of God covers everything. Therefore, rituals are not unnecessary. We are saved by Jesus. Now our concern is on the heavenly realm, we are people of virtue in world of vices. We are saved due to our faith in Jesus; our belief that Jesus is the living Son of God. We are saved due to the faith of Jesus; he gave himself as a righteous offering on the cross to bring us salvation. When you come to Christ you are spiritually circumcised. The ancient practices of fasting, self sacrifice, and denial were all designed to show individual devotion to God. These ancient practices suppress evil desire but do not get to the root of evil; they do not replace evil desire with holy desire.

Believers are to be on guard from the influences of human speculation. You have found divine favor, received salvation, and are fulfilled in Christ. This is cause for celebration. Humanity defaulted after our agreement to obey God. Our generous God forgave the fault and cancelled the debt. It was paid in full by the crucifixion of Christ. The faithful do not work at attempting to prove themselves worthy. The faithful work at caring for others. Faithfulness is lifestyle that is different from those who belong to world.

I encourage everyone to compare human teaching with the Bible. The lessons must be congruent with the teaching of Jesus. With the full pardon we receive a permanent status with God as a child of God. So, we do not need strict regulations that come from human authority. God has given to us Christ to save us, the Holy Spirit to support us, and the Bible to guide us.