

**Colossians 2:20-23**

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, 21 "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"? 22 All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings. 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.

The warnings continue against destructive misguided teaching. The religious practices that are being forced upon the Colossian church are of human design and are not necessary because the people are now united with Christ. The antagonists are preying on fear. They are in essence teaching that my way is the only right way and if you don't follow we are teaching then you will miss the grand prize. People are afraid to miss the grand prize so they follow the group mentality and the appearance of wisdom. The doctrine of the letter is Christ focused, so do not let these people fool you. Don't let them judge, condemn, or disqualify you. The emphasis is on correct doctrine; it is the most significant thing. Without the correct doctrine people get off track theologically. The main thing that Jesus was up against was an errant religious environment and this was due to incorrect doctrine. This off centered doctrine is created by humans for their own benefit and satisfaction. This is directly in conflict with God's will. It is a contrast between authoritarianism and the love of God. Humans were dictating the will of God and forcing their interpretation upon others through rules, regulations, and traditions, instead of following the will of God. When you have Jesus, accept him, and become a Christian, then you don't need the rules, regulations, and rituals because you already have God's blessing.

Today's Scripture is the last explicit argument against false teaching. There is a contrast within each individual of a life before baptism and a life after baptism. Believers died with Christ. This is a very important biblical concept. You have died with Christ. I invite you to take a moment and picture the imagery. You are found in divine favor. That is a really good scenario. When you die with Christ then all of the physical stuff is dead. Therefore, you do not need human regulations. You have died to the physical things that are a show of piety. You are liberated from the influences of the world and all of the power and control dynamics. The rules and regulations are not applicable. Regulations about what you can't eat or touch are not given to the religious world by God, these are given by those that lord over others. All of these regulations apply to things that perish. Things of the earth wither and die. The prohibitions appear wise and are designed for the appearance of being pious. In reality it is a matter of self gratification and has no value. When you are raised with Christ, you have a new identity. Christians are set apart for God. As a child of God you belong to the heavenly realm which is totally different from the interests and obligations of the physical earth.

We do not know details of the problem that the church was facing. However, the audience of the original letter knew firsthand what the heresy was. Whatever, it was some form of elitism that claimed special privilege through knowledge and lorded requirements over others. It is a spiritual pride that allows some to judge others and place them in

subservient position. Placing importance on things above love and justice is a real problem. It is in essence the same sin as always - human will at odds with the will of God. The sphere of humanity is sinful opposition to God but God responds to fallen humanity by sending us Jesus to fix all of that. Therefore, we no longer need human designed discipline and action. Now we are ruled by a divine moral code.

There are two realms of understanding; the heavenly realm of a divine reality, and the earthly realm of human will. The issue is to guard the truth of the gospel. Genuine doctrine is Christ centered; all else devalues, diminishes, and dilutes the truth of the gospel. Christ is not subordinate to any other power - not even death. Christ bestowed blessings and redemption on us all. The opposition is trying to seek God's blessing outside of the heavenly realm. This is flawed logic that is trying to get the approval that Christ has already given.

The danger of the misguided views is that it distorts the Christian gospel. The same problem reappears throughout history because the real problem is human will at odds with will of God. This is sin and Christians are dead to sin because we are raised to a new life that is fixated on the heavenly realm. You are a new person that is made to be like Christ. Reconciliation is offered to us in Christ with complete restoration.