

Colossians 2:16-23

Guard your Freedom in Christ

Christ has redeemed us and has freed us from sin and given us communion with God. Every earthly attempt to enslave us to a ritual, festival, habit, food choice, drink choice, teaching of man, self-imposed discipline, or human rule will NOT improve our standing with God. It is **never** Jesus + _____ = salvation!

The false teachers are trying to add to the Gospel. They are creating rules and stipulations to measure and attain some higher spiritual level of maturity. Unfortunately, we are often doing the same thing, usually unintentionally. Churches create their own particular culture. They will often look up to certain people and their choices and look down at other people and their choices – even if none of the choices being made are considered sinful by Christ. We must be aware.

2:16 - What are examples of days, holidays, or seasons that we hold as sacred (honored above other days)?

How can we use these in a way that honors the Lord, and when do we dishonor the Lord?

Have you ever felt that your spirituality was being judged because of your choices in any of these areas: rituals, festivals, habits, food choices, drink choices, teachings of man, self-imposed disciplines, or human rules? Do you think you have ever played the judge in any of these areas?

It is difficult, but necessary to recognize when areas of life are to be settled between the individual conscience and God. To regard something as religious obligation that is not clearly taught in God's Word is to take the same direction as the Colossian false teachers.

2:17 – What does Paul mean by calling these things “mere shadows”?

It is natural to ask the question, “what about the principle of restriction in order to care for the weaker brother?”

“Elsewhere, in dealing with these matters, the apostle introduces a further principle which might impose a voluntary limitation on one's Christian liberty – the principle of respect for the tender conscience of a 'weaker brother' (Rom. 14:13-21; 1 Cor. 8:7-13). But this latter principle is invoked when Christians are asserting their liberty at all costs (even at the cost of Christian charity); at Colossae it is precisely Christian liberty that needs to be asserted in the face of specious attempts to undermine it” (Bruce, 114).

2:18 – In what ways can Christians be distracted from Christ according to this verse?

Enthusiasm in anything other than Christ should be carefully weighed. What are examples from verse 18 that we see in other religions? Our culture? Sneaking into our churches? BCC?

2:19 – What happens when we chase after things other than Christ? According to 2:19, how do we grow? How can false teaching derail us from Christian growth?

In 2:23, we see the intention (though additional mal-intentions may be in play) of all the “don’t, don’t, don’t” rules. It is to help one fight against outward sin. Unfortunately, this is a warped view of temptation, sin, holiness, and the active work of Christ in our life. A child (and a baby Christian) may best respond to simple “do’s” and “don’ts,” but as we mature something more is necessary to continue to grow in head, heart, and hand obedience.

Isaiah 29:13 – Explain God’s perspective:

Isaiah 1:11-15 – Why is the Lord so angry with his people? What does this teach you about sin? About God’s hatred and seriousness toward sin?

How will do’s and don’ts ultimately fail in creating the kind of hearts that honor God?

John 14:15; 21; 23 – How does Jesus describe obedience? Based on His words, how would we grow in obedience?

Titus 2:11-14 – Explain how the Gospel and good deeds are connected?

How does grace motivate us towards good deeds?

After reading these Isaiah, John, and Titus verses: What do we learn about parenting (how does grace and heart work fit in)? How does this change our approach when talking with others about their sin and struggles?

Where have we tried to use rules instead of love and grace to inspire heart-led obedience? How can we grow and change in this area of our lives?