

**2007-08-19 Colossians ch2 v18-ch3 v11 (Ignite UK)**

We continue to look at Paul and his focus on Christ. It is Jesus that the Scriptures point to and it is Jesus that Paul directs all the attention towards. Paul has made it a point in the face of this false teaching to point towards Christ. The Lamb of God who has come and paid the debt for God's people! It is Christ who is the Head of the church, who is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. It is Christ who holds all things together by His Word. Jesus Christ the Son of God is the One in whom we find completeness and reconciliation to a holy God. Nothing else will do!!

However, these men who Satan is working through are trying all sorts of things to pull people away from the One in whom they find life. The devil does not want us to hold fast to foundational Rock of Christ. He wants us to forsake Jesus and go the way of men, a way that leads to destruction not life.

Have you ever met someone who thinks they have to do certain things to be seen as holy? They want an accountability partner for the sake of appearance or are quick to point out how much they know! These type of people desire to be lifted up and seen by others as holy, righteous, godly men and women! But in truth they are the very opposite. Then you have those who sincerely want to be set-apart for God. They want to live a life that is holy. Not for the sake of what others will think but because they seek to please God. The problem is they think that there are certain things you must do to become holy! And there in lies the problem. There is nothing you can do that will make you holy.

In Colossae, you find men and women, who we know from the preceding chapters, are striving to please God. They are a people who for the most part are sharing their faith and have a love for "all the saints." (1:4) But the false-teachers want them to believe that they need to do more to be holy, that they must pursue something other than just Christ. However, the truth is that it is in Christ and Christ alone that we are made holy. It is in Him that we are set-apart as God's people.

Therefore, Paul closes chapter 2 by continuing to refute the Colossian false-teachers and their warped theology! NOTE ABOUT THEOLOGY!

As we looked last week at the error of legalism, the apostle continues in the same line of thought in the proceeding verses. He again is making a frontal assault on the ideology that is being peddled by these men.

I believe this to be a great example for us to follow. When false teaching raises its' ugly head we do not need to sit back and beat around the bush so to speak. There are times when error is so dangerous that we must refute it head-on. We call it out, we call it what it is.

- The deity and humanity of Christ.
- The creation of man in the image of God.

- The exclusivity of the gospel message.
- The depravity of man, our need for a Savior.

These are just a few of the doctrines that we must be quick to defend. There must be fences around the essentials of the Christian faith, fences that are there to protect the gospel message. Because if there are no fences, if we allow these things to be deconstructed, then we lose the gospel and if we lose the gospel we lose the one message that can save people from an eternal hell. That is why we must study, and study the deep things of God. It is why the Bible calls us to be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks. So we can protect the gospel, and in 80 years still have something to take to the nations.

The great apostle new the sufficiency of Christ to present the believer holy before God was an issue worth fighting for and he does not shy away.

## CONTENT

In verses 18-23, Paul shows angel worship and ascetic practice to be folly. These may have the appearance of wisdom, as does some legalistic philosophies, but in reality, these ideas are folly.

*“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,” (vs. 18)*

This continues to remind the believers that no one can judge their standing before God based on something other than their faith in the Lord Jesus. It may seem that “ascetic practices”, the harsh discipline of the body, may be something that would be acceptable to God. You are disciplining your body for the sake of knowing God...is that not a good thing? And what is this about worshipping “angels”? The false-teachers apparently taught that it was a sign of humility, that they were not worthy to approach God directly, so they would allow angels to be their mediators. They miss the fact that it is Christ who is the “*one mediator between God and man.*” (1 Tim 2:5) And since they do not point to Jesus then they point people away from the One who matters, the One whom they were saved by and for!

Paul goes on to say that all these things were “elemental”, the same Geek word that we talked about back in verse 8 of chapter 2. Legalism, the worship of angels, ascetic practices, these may have appear to be wise courses of action in the promotion of holiness but in reality were elementary things. They were simple human invention and have:

*“no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” (vs. 23)*

As believers, Paul tells the Colossians and us today that we have died to these things. John MacArthur notes:

*“Through their union with Christ, the redeemed are set free from man-made rules designed to promote spirituality. To practice asceticism, Paul writes, is to adopt a worldly system of religion, based on elementary principles.”*

Man made rules do not produce true spirituality or holiness, only union with Christ, which happens at conversion, produces in us spiritual life and holiness. It is in Christ that we are set-apart as God’s children. And so Paul moves into the next chapter of Colossians, in light of all that has been said, and begins to show the practicality of such a theological worldview.

That since we have died in Christ and been:

*“raised with Christ” (3:1)*

That there are certain things that should naturally follow. We have died to the things of the world and we are “new creations”, the “old has passed away”. And since we are new creations, we should:

1. Set our minds of things above.

*“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” (3: 1-2)*

Here you can here the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33. Christ tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God.” To seek the things that are above! Set our minds on those things that dwell in the heavenlies for that is where our Savior is, that is where our heavenly Father sits enthroned above the nations and it is where our citizenship rests. We are but sojourners here in this place. Earth is not our final destination; it is not where our hearts lie. We are strangers in this land.

I spent almost a year in Iraq. There was not a day when I did not think about home. The desert was a place that was a temporary dwelling. It was not home and it was not where my citizenship on earth was. And just as I thought about home while in the desert, as Christians we set our minds on our heavenly home. The Greek word is written in a way that denotes continual action. So we are to continuously be preoccupied with thinking of heaven.

And doesn’t that make sense anyway. My treasure is not found in this place, it is not found on earth or in anything, this world offers. IT is found in Christ, who has purchased me by His blood and provided me with an eternal relationship with His Father. If my treasure is God through Christ then where my treasure is my thoughts will be! We

seek these heavenly things by setting our mind upon them. We seek Christ by setting our mind on Christ. J.B Lightfoot says it like this:

*“You must not only seek heaven, you must also think heaven.”*

We want to glorify and honor our Lord and Master, so we think about Him! We think about how we can honor Him, so it leads us to look at how He lived and what He has said. That naturally leads us to look at His Word to discover His life and words, in which we find the pattern for our life. He was a man that was characterized by:

- a. tenderness
- b. kindness
- c. meekness
- d. patience
- e. wisdom
- f. strength
- g. forgiveness

And the list can go on. So as we “seek the things that are above” by “setting our minds on the things that are above,” namely Christ and His divine attributes, then we are challenged to live the type of life that glorifies God by reflecting the character of His Son.

And to make sure we get the point, Paul tells us that this means...

## 2. Putting to death what is earthly.

*“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (vs. 5)*

Paul goes through a list of things that do not honor and bring praise to Christ. He mentions all sorts of ungodly character attributes and points to those things as the reason “*the wrath of God is coming.*” (vs. 6) God must punish all sin or He fails to be perfectly God. And He will not fail. There are certain things that dishonor Him, that fall short of His standard, and those things have a penalty...death. So Paul says put these things to death. Do not let others see you, who are God’s own, doing those things and be enticed to do them as well. Instead put them to death do not do these things. Instead put on the “new self” the one that is reflects the character of Christ and point people towards Him. And as people are pointed towards Jesus God will draw them to Himself and justify them completely through Jesus.

As the OT saints were to separate themselves from other nations through obedience to God, we are to separate ourselves by seeking to reflect the character of the One who was perfectly obedient. The sins that are mentioned in this passage are characteristics that we should hate. Romans 12:9 says to “Detest what is evil”, to have a pure hatred of those things that dishonor God. We instead seek to imitate Christ, showing His love for the church in our own lives and actions. And as people see Christ

in us they are drawn by the Spirit to their God. And as they are drawn, that same Spirit who takes out the heart of stone and puts back a heart of flesh changes them.

As sinners are changed, they are united to the body of Christ. And it is Christ who unifies the body, who brings all things together. "*Christ is all, and in all.*" (vs. 11) And as a body of believers that submit to Jesus alone, that are made complete in Him alone, we join together to glorify and exalt Him alone! Are we living a life that has crucified the things of this world and is seeking Christ who is above?