

AUGUST 16, 2020

COLOSSIANS

THE RULES | 2:16-23

"Just Tell Me What To Do!" Shadow and Substance. The Rules can't save us. Rules can be important. But what is more important is understanding what lies behind the rules. When that happens we know when rules are to followed or discarded. We can find comfort in easy rules, but maturity calls us into deeper thinking and living. Beyond rules religion to Jesus-shaped living. Do not, do not, do not - is not the way to happiness. Let's learn together this Sunday!

Colossians 2:16-23 (CEB)

¹⁶ So don't let anyone judge you about eating or drinking or about a festival, a new moon observance, or sabbaths. ¹⁷ These religious practices are only a shadow of what was coming—the body that cast the shadow is Christ. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone who wants to practice harsh self-denial and worship angels rob you of the prize. They go into detail about what they have seen in visions and have become unjustifiably arrogant by their selfish way of thinking. ¹⁹ They don't stay connected to the head. The head nourishes and supports the whole body through the joints and ligaments, so the body grows with a growth that is from God.

²⁰ If you died with Christ to the way the world thinks and acts, why do you submit to rules and regulations as though you were living in the world? ²¹ "Don't handle!" "Don't taste!" "Don't touch!" ²² All these things cease to exist when they are used. Such rules are human commandments and teachings. ²³ They look like they are wise with this self-made religion and their self-denial by the harsh treatment of the body, but they are no help against indulging in selfish immoral behavior.

- I. Introduction 1:1-2.5
- II. Doctrinal Correction 2:6-3.4
 - A. The Essential Exhortation 2:6-7
 - B. Correction of False Religion 2:8-19
 - 1. Philosophical Problems 2:8-15
 - 2. Practical Manifestations 2:16-19
 - a. Part 1: The Practices 2:16-17
 - b. Part 2: The Opponents 2:18-19
 - C. Exhortation to True Religion 2:20-3.4
 - 1. In Light of Corporate Death 2:20-23
 - a. The Question about the Rules 2:20
 - b. Clarifying the Rules 2:21
 - c. Deconstructing the Theology of the Rules 2:22-23

REVIEW:

- “To treat the church simply from the angle of sociology--as an instance of an association or a club or a political movement... will fail to see the church’s fundamental essence, namely, an embodied manifestation of cosmic reconciliation” (McKnight, Colossians, 58).
- “Christian ethics in the Pauline mode becomes learning to live in loving fellowship with those who are unlike us and from possibly wildly different statuses.... Pauline ethics is far more concerned with the “virtues” that are community-shaped” (McKnight, Col. 60-61).
- “...Paul’s concern is not so much how individuals grow personally or even how individuals might take on a more group focus, but on how a new-creation fellowship takes shape over against the Roman Empire. The primary “virtue,” then, is a community shaped by individual Christian who indwell it (2.6-3.4)” (61).
- McKnight calls these false teachers “*halakic* mystics/charismatics.”

THROUGH THE PASSAGE (Meynell)

Colossians 2:16-17 Don’t Be Judged By Legalists

“Jesus towers above human history casts a cosmic and historic shadow over all peoples and all times... The strange thing is that Jesus does not merely cast shadows after his life. He also casts shadows before it.”

“...Paul viewed rituals much like we might think about a knife. The knife of the criminal is dangerous, but the knife of the surgeon is healing. Knives can be used wrongly, but at the end of the day we still need knives!” (Nijay Gupta, 111-112).

Colossians 2:18-19 Don’t Be Disqualified By Mystics

Practices must lead to Jesus. **FULL STOP.**
When they lead to anything else they are a problem.

PART TWO

Colossians 2:20-23 The Rules Fail In Four Ways:

“The widespread fascination today with culture tends to ignore the New Testament’s widespread critique of the world, one dimension of which is culture. The *halakic* mystics [in Colosse] belong to the world’s rebellion and are seeking to convert the Colossians into their kind of worldliness” (McKnight, 282).

Colossians 2:20-21 Incompatibility of Legalism

Colossians 2:22 The Nature of Legalism

“It is worldly to be religious...We are to enjoy our security and freedom, and not regress back to the old way of thinking. But his is hard, precisely because the legalistic mind-set runs so deeply in us....God’s love for me does not depend on my spiritual and moral performance! It depends on Christ dying for me. This is a lifelong battle--so we should not be caught by surprise. Legalism is normal and ingrained thinking. But it is emphatically not Christian thinking” (Meynell,155).

Colossians 2:23 The Irony of Legalism

NEXT STEPS