

Christ in you...

The message of Colossians



Week 6: *Fatal Attraction* (Sects In The City, Part 2)

INTRODUCTION – Structure As Servant, Not Master

Mark 2:27-28

DINE IN – Learning The Text In Its Context

Colossians 2:16-23

- **THEREFORE:** Paul is warning the Colossians about anyone who would take their focus off of Christ and deceive them into religious captivity. We are brought to fullness and freedom in Jesus. Why add anything to his liberating Gospel?
- **JUDGMENT:** In **Acts 11:1-3**, the first reaction Peter receives after telling fellow believers about the Gospel spreading is criticism for not following the letter of the Law when evangelizing. Sigh.
- **DIETS & DAYS:** The early church was reeling with the dilemma of how to relate to the rules in their own Bibles now that Christ had fulfilled the Law. (The issue is important for every generation of Christians.) Some confused conservatism with holiness and judged others who failed to follow the letter of the Law. Paul says they have missed the point of the Gospel.
- **CELEBRATIONS & SABBATHS:** Note that all Old Testament laws are dealt with as a whole. Paul does not treat Sabbaths as special because they are commanded in the Decalogue (Ten Commandments). New Covenant believers live by the spirit – and *not* the letter – of the entire Law.
- **SHADOW & SUBSTANCE:** The letter of the Law is the shadow of which Jesus is the reality. Why try to follow the shadow of Jesus now that he has come in the flesh?
Hebrews 8:13; 9:10; 10:1-4
- **WORSHIP OF ANGELS:** Could mean: a) Paying too much homage to angels, giving them too much attention; b) joining in with the angels' worship of God via mystical visions and ecstatic experiences; c) religious practices given by angels.
- **DISQUALIFIED & DISCONNECTED:** Paul talks as if the possibility is real that someone can lose their prize and their life-giving connection to Christ, the head of the Body.
- **ELEMENTAL FORCES:** The Greek word, *stoicheia*, refers to the basic building blocks or most fundamental units of anything – what notes are to music, bricks are to buildings, and letters are to words.
- **WORLDLY RULES:** Now that we are in the New Covenant days, following the Old Covenant ways is considered the way of the world and the way of merely human teaching.

- **RELIGION VS. “CHRIST IN YOU”:** Religious rules and rituals and routines can be attractive because they bring a sense of order and apparent spiritual growth. But heart-change is the goal of the New Covenant.

Galatians 4:8-12; Romans 14:16-17; 2 Corinthians 3:6

TAKE OUT – Applying The Text To Our Context

TAKE OUT #1: Our problem is our *sarx* (flesh, sinful nature), not our *soma* (body) or *cosmos* (world). This means that our bodies and the rest of creation are not evil and something to be shunned or discarded. Christians should live as stewards of our physical world. Our lives should be “earthly”, involved, and engaged.

TAKE OUT #2: Spiritual growth is not a matter of recipes (e.g., read your Bible this much in this way at this time each day; pray this often in this fashion; etc.) . We can always benefit from learning more about the approaches and methods of others, yes, but we should not be bound by them or the recipe becomes a rule and the rule becomes a distraction. Ultimately, God has designed that we should grow through Jesus, the head of the body.

TAKE OUT #3: Paul's remedy for the captivating power of false teaching is Jesus. Jesus is centre stage. The Father is the writer/director. The Holy Spirit operates the spotlight. Christians who are too Spirit-focussed need to stop staring up into the balcony. He doesn't appreciate it.

Should our interest shift from knowing the Son to knowing the Spirit, two evils would at once result. On the one hand, like the Colossian angel worshippers, we should impoverish ourselves by “...not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God”. On the other hand, we should enmesh ourselves in a world of spurious “spiritual” feelings and fancies that are not Christ related and do not correspond to anything that actually exists. ...We should not take one step down this road. Questions about the Holy Spirit that are not forms and facets of the basic question (How may I come to know Jesus Christ and know him better?) ought not to be asked. This is a basic mental discipline that the Bible imposes on us. In golf it would be described as keeping your eye on the ball.

~ J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*

CONCLUSION – Keeping Our Eye On The Ball

Hebrews 12:2

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

1. After reviewing this week's message, share one thing that most challenged, puzzled, or encouraged you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

2. Read our key text, in a variety of translations if possible. a) What verse or idea stands out to you the most? Why? b) How would you explain your spiritual life to someone who asked, “Why don't you follow everything in the Bible?” c) If Paul were writing this passage to us today, how do you think it would read? What religious issues and spiritual distractions would he identify in our lives today? d) How could we apply

Christ's principle of "The Sabbath was made for us and not us for the Sabbath" to other areas of biblical teaching? Think of examples.

So WHAT?...

3. Re-read "Takeout #2". Share with each other some spiritual practices that have helped you grow, remembering that we are not duty-bound to replicate anyone else's routines with precision. What changes might you make to your life in order to grow spiritually? Try committing to one change this week and pray for each other.

<i>Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, March 16, 2008</i>
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