

“Breaking Free – Part II”

Colossians 2 v16 – 3 v4

Scripture Ref: Acts 10:9-16; Acts 15:28-29; Matt 15:17-18; Matt 5:14-16

- 1. Last time, four key areas that contest the philosophy of legalism...**
 - a. Circumcised in Christ**
 - b. Alive in Christ**
 - c. Freed from the law in Christ**
 - d. Victorious in Christ**
- 2. This week we conclude Paul’s beware of...**
 - a. Legalistic Rituals**
 - b. Mysticism**
 - c. Asceticism**

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Warning #1 - Beware of Legalistic Rituals

16 **So** let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

- 3. The question occasionally comes up in Christian circles: Should Christians today be kosher?**
 - a. Should we follow the OT guidelines about food and feasts, or even the Sabbath?**
 - b. And as a result, you will find groups of believers that practice some form of Jewish dietary law, and religious ceremony.**
 - c. With perspectives ranging from “it’s better to eat this way” to “your not really pleasing God if you don’t practice this”**
- 4. So how do we resolve this question? I believe scripture guides us...**

Acts 10:9-16

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all

kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." 15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

5. **Later at a meeting in Jerusalem, some of the believing Pharisees (yes, some of them received Christ!) argued that Gentile believers needed to be circumcised and obey the laws of Moses regarding Jewish life.**
 - a. **And the Apostles met, and made a ruling**

Acts 15:28-29

*28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. **(thank goodness – I like bacon!)***

6. **Now is there anything wrong if a believer determines in their heart to follow the dietary and ritual prescriptions of the Jews?**
 - a. **NO! You are free to be as Jewish as you want!**
 - b. **And many do – I have gentile friends who are totally kosher!**
 - c. **BUT – the problem Paul is addressing is this....**
 - d. **Ritualistic living will NOT bring you closer to God.**
 - e. **None of these things will cause God to be more pleased with you.**
 - f. **None of these things make you more spiritual than the brother who eats bacon and cuts the grass on Sunday!**
7. **These things, Paul tells us, “are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” – you see a shadow when something is approaching, but the shadow is not the object!**
 - a. **Like having a toy motorcycle when you were a child... you played with that motorcycle ...**
 - b. **But one day you became a man, and you get a new motorcycle, the real thing...**
 - c. **But instead of riding your new motorcycle, you go back to your room and play with the toy – vroom vroom!**
8. **Don't you want the real thing? Not have to pretend it makes a cool noise? Not have to push it around the floor?**
 - a. **Jesus has come – and He is the REAL THING!**

Warning #2 - Beware of Mysticism

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

9. This is a mistranslation...

Col 2:18

*18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. **Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen**, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. (from New International Version)*

- a. **IOW – don't get ripped off by this false pretense of spiritual mysticism.**

This month: At least 50 people in in the district of Kottayam in Kerala state of India have damaged their sight by staring at the sun in the hope of seeing a vision of the Virgin Mary, doctors say. Hundreds of Indian Catholics reportedly stared at the sun last month following rumours that a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary could be seen in the sky. Soon afterwards, local eye hospitals started receiving patients with burn damage to their retinas.

10. New read this and shake our heads, “those poor uneducated, gullible Indians...”

- a. **But let me tell you something, spiritual mysticism is alive and well in the church.**
- b. **Virgin Mary sightings, people flock to them and pray to her**
- c. **“Bleeding or weeping statues”**
- d. **Angelology**

11. “Signs and wonders” movement...

- a. **Not talking about when God moves in the body – because I believe that the bible clearly teaches that miracles are for today...**
- b. **But when the entire focus of the church and the ministry is the “experiential”**
- c. **...and the only activity when believers gather is seeking to see signs and wonders**
- d. **then this becomes a form of mysticism – and you hear it in the conversations – “I saw this, I saw that” – almost a bragging contest of who has witnessed the greatest sign**
- e. **“If you have not experienced gold dust in the sanctuary, then you have not experienced the ‘full anointing’ of God in your service!”**

12. And the result is a form of spiritual pride – going on about what you have seen, and being puffed up with the “anointing” that you have...

- a. **The modern spiritual mystic prides themselves because of the special visions of secret things which were not open to the eyes of ordinary Christians.**

19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

13. When these strange, mystical movements arise in the church, they don't appeal to the *whole body*, but only to a few “elite” Christians.

- a. **This is not the case under the Head, Jesus - He wants all the body to grow together.**
- b. **This is God's plan for church growth: We remain faithful and connected to Jesus (our Head), and God gives the increase.**

Beware of Asceticism

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations -- 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using -- according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

14. Asceticism: the doctrine that a person can attain a high spiritual and moral state by practicing self-denial, self-mortification, and the like

- a. **“Do not....do not...do not”: This is a perfect description of legalistic religion, defined more by what we *don't do* than by what we *do*.**
- b. **And that is how some Christians define their walk – ‘I don't drink, don't smoke, don't chew, don't go with girls who do’**

Matt 15:17-18

17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.

15. Guys – you are not a witness by what you are NOT – you are a witness by what you ARE...

Matt 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

16. The world needs rules and regulations to keep order and protect men from each other

- a. **And we see how successful that is – people will do whatever they can get away with**
- b. **And they will do what they probably won't get away with, thinking that they will get away with it!**

17. For us - Denying your flesh what it desires is NOT the way to gain victory over the indulgence of the flesh...

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

*In Greek mythology, there were beautiful island-dwelling winged creatures called sirens whose singing lured unwary sailors to their deaths onto the rocks. No one who heard the singing and lived. Ulysses wanted to hear the singing, so he filled the ears of his sailors with wax, so they would not turn into the rocks. When Ulysses passed the Isle of Sirens, he had himself tied to the mast. He heard the singing, and strained against the ropes, begging his sailors to untie him, but they could not hear his cries. After that encounter, the song of the Sirens haunted Ulysses' mind for the rest of his life. **(this is a picture of our attempts to restrain our flesh)***

When Orpheus the great musician passed by the Sirens, he heard their songs, but Orpheus had created more beautiful music than that of the Sirens, and so he was not swayed, and he played music on his lyre that was so beautiful that it led the sailors away from the Island, saving them all.

18. Hey – can we get hold of this truth – To know who we are and whose we are ...

- a. **Our life is hidden in Him – people might look at us and we seem just like everyone else, BUT**
- b. **There is a hidden resource, an invisible reality, which the world does not have and cannot see.**
- c. **This refers to what Paul has talked about earlier in this letter, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."**
- d. **This extra dimension is not in the reaches of space; it is right within the heart, an untouchable, invisible dimension within us.**
- e. **This is the glory of the Christian life and the secret breaking us free of the bondage of legalism...**
- f. **And into the reality of living for Christ...**

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