

THE CALL TO HOLD FAST

Colossians 2:16-23

May 30, 2021

History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future. To try to hold fast is to be swept aside. – JFK
Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet-anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. – Grant

Introduction:

- The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the importance of being alert for _____.
 - Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17-18
- Do not be fooled! We still face false teaching today that the church, through the ministry of the written Word, must confront for the _____ of our people and the _____ of the gospel.
- Paul addresses false teaching three times in Colossians 2 (vs. 4, 8, and 22) while also proclaiming the truth of the gospel within this same chapter (vs. 11-13)
- Paul concludes the immediate context of Colossians 2 by demonstrating that the gospel achieved _____ over those who set themselves up against Jesus Christ.

Righteousness Without Relationship:

- Colossians 2:16** – *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.*
 - a. Because God “disarmed the rulers and authorities (v. 15),” we are not to be judged or ruled by their earthly standards any longer.
 - b. Who are these rulers and authorities? They cannot be mediators between God and man for there is only _____ mediator, the man Christ Jesus. (I Timothy 2:5)
 - c. “Pass judgment...” – See the image of pronouncing disciplinary judgment on the _____ of a fellow Christian. (I Cor. 5:12-13)
 - d. Rulers and authorities who have some influence over the Colossian church have led these believers to conclude that right standing before God includes Jesus, but it **ALSO** includes maintaining _____ holiness and purity according to certain rules and regulations.
- Colossians 2:17** – *These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*
 - a. The OT instructions given to Israel provided order and structure to Israel’s worship but were never meant to be the final hope. Consider how Christ’s work on the cross shifted these elements from v. 16.
 1. Food and drink →
 2. Religious festivals →
 3. New moons →
 4. The Sabbath →
- Colossians 2:18** – *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,*

- a. "Disqualify" – pictures an _____ deciding against someone and declaring him to be unworthy of the prize.
- b. The manner of this defrauding is described in three ways in verses 18-19 as insisting, going on, and not holding. For the sake of time today, I'm only going to focus on the third of these warnings.

IV. **Colossians 2:19** – *and 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.*

- a. Holding fast (krateō) → laying hands on a person to seize (lit.); to keep carefully and faithfully; it is not discarding; not letting go
 - i. Seen in Rev. 3:11, II Thess. 2:15, and Heb. 4:14
- b. Verse 19 gives a locative reference to this passage, letting us know that Christ, who is the substance and no shadow, is the head (Eph. 4:15). We are the body. And as long as the body holds fast to head, there is life and growth that is divinely _____ from God Himself.

Summary Statement: Believers in Jesus Christ are not to be deceived by pious sounding _____ but are to hold fast to the substance of Jesus Christ from whom the whole body grows.

Religion Without Results:

I. **Colossians 2:20** – *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—*

- a. Paul contrasts life and growth (v. 19) with the believer's position of _____ with Christ.
- b. Paul uses a conditional cause and effect argument. The emphasis is on the final question...why do you submit to worldly regulations?

II. **Colossians 2:21-22** – ²¹ *"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"* ²² *(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?*

- a. Specific examples of the regulations from v. 20. "Do not...do not...do not."
- b. Second, he unpacks that their association with worldliness rather than godliness means they are destined to die. There is no _____ power in following these commands. There is no _____ hope that obedience can be our propitiation before God.

III. **Colossians 2:23** – *These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*

- a. Paul has concluded his question in verses 20-22. Now he answers with a positive/negative contrast.
- b. Those worldly standards do appear good. They _____ appear to be wise. But in the end, those standards are rooted in self and have _____ value. See Psalm 34:6-10.

Summary Statement: God's Word piercingly asks why believers would _____ to the world's standards of righteousness, which have no spiritual value, when we have already died with Christ to those principles.

Hebrews 10:23 – *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*