

Colossians

“A Worthy Walk”

III. Main Teaching: 1:15-4:6

2:4-23 **Walking in the Word of Christ**

2:11-17 In Forgiveness – 2:18-23 In Freedom

2:16-23

“Jesus, our life jacket”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 16-17 Ritualism

III. Vs. 18-19 Mysticism

IV. Vs. 20-23 Legalism

I. Intro.

Most folks view warning signs in two different ways: a “**life jacket**” or a “**strait jacket.**”

When a warning sign is seen as interrupting our fun it’s a strait jacket pinning us down.

Ah but when it keeps us from harm’s way it becomes a life jacket. My granddaughter can’t swim yet but loves to go boating with us, last year she didn’t want to put on her life jacket while on our boat as she saw it as uncomfortable. That’s because she has never needed it, had she needed it she would have insisted that we put it on her. Warnings often go unheeded because they are issued before trouble is spotted or needed.

The opening of this section with the word “SO” is very important as it links Paul’s words about the five truth about Jesus and why we need not explore false teaching to this section here. In these verses Paul speaks on three aspects of false teaching that seem to be alluring to people: **Ritualism, Mysticism and Legalism.** So Paul is issuing warnings about false teaching that we need to listen, the question is will you view this as a life jacket or a strait jacket?

II. Vs. 16-17 Ritualism

Vs. 16-17 It is clear in the New Testament that New Covenant Christians aren't to be into counting "calendars and calories" because those things were just shadows of the real deal in Jesus!

1. **Ritualism**: Ritualism is the "*The making lists and checking them twice to see the knotty from the nice.*" The problem with lists is that they are mechanical and you can just go through the motions without the emotion and then judge everyone else by your actions. Paul goes on to list the two most popular "*lists*" in his day and remember that most of these were influenced by Judaism and Paul at one time held all of these as true:
 - a. **Food or drink**: The first one deal's with **special diets.** In the Old Testament God gave the Israelites a specific list of things they could eat "*clean and unclean*" animals. So should we practice those things today? The simple answer is found in verse 17 where Paul acknowledges that they had a purpose designated by God for the time that God instituted them as they were a "*shadow of things to come*" but now "*the substance is of Christ*". In other words they were road signs saying to slow down or stop because there was a cliff and a great chasm but now the bridge has been built and you can cross safely. I'm not saying that you **should** eat and drink anything you want, I'm saying you **can**. As you read your Bibles the key in the New Testament is **personal conviction, moderation** and **not causing others to stumble.**
 - b. **Festival**: These *special ceremonies and rituals; centered on the calendar either yearly, monthly in the case of the new moon or weekly in the case of the*

Sabbath. There is nothing wrong with these parties and celebrations only the use of them to judge other who either participate or don't participate in them

All foods are pure and everyday belongs to Jesus; this is the day the Lord has made so I will be glad and rejoice in it while eating bacon! All these things are like pictures that you would carry of your family; when you are away from the real thing they can remind you of your loved ones, the memories and lives you share but they are only photos. I think most folks would be upset with me if they showed me a photo of their loved one before I met them and when I had an opportunity to get to know their loved one chose to hang onto the photo instead of hanging out with the real person. It's like parakeets when you put a mirror in front of them they become fooled into thinking they are tweeting to a real bird when all they really are doing is singing to themselves! Jesus is a real person the center of life, the only lasting source of excitement and only place of refuge during the storms of life so don't settle for a mirror of your-self, get to know the real Person of Jesus!

III. Vs. 18-19 Mysticism

The author of the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is so "*much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name.*" Yet there still seems to be fascination with angels and getting info from them.

2. **Mysticism**: Paul describes by including two characteristics of this "*mysticism*" as "*false humility and the worship of angels*". At the this time there was a popular teaching that was around that held that people could gain a special knowledge and enlightenment by placating angels and ascended masters and through continual obedience a person could attain a higher state of Oneness with God and even

become God. This type of mysticism has been repeated in Hinduism, Buddhism, Transcendental Meditation. Even Mormonism tells their followers, “*As man is, God once was; as God is, man will be.*” All of this is packaged in false humility as folks are sold that we are to stop seeing ourselves as self and instead starting seeing ourselves as part of the universe. Paul goes on to say that there are two dangers with mysticism and both deal with losing:

- a. Vs.18 **Lose reward**: Paul tells us of the danger of going after this mysticism is that it will “*cheat you of your reward.*” It will keep you from experiencing “Christ in you the hope of glory”! It will rip you off of the true joy, excitement and peace that only come from a relationship with Jesus. We don’t need some person’s book or teaching on their encounter to tell us that God is real and that He loves us; we have His Word on it. We don’t need some persons account of what happened to them to tell us that there is life after death Jesus has already told us all we need to know about that. Paul tells us that such a pursuit in these things just “*vainly puffs up our own fleshly mind*”.
- b. Vs. 19 **Lose your head**: When a believer gets involved in mysticism they cut themselves off from their head, Jesus. When a person gets their head cut off all life ceases. Initially there will be frantic activity but soon life will cease and there will be no activity. Losing one’s heads also causes a person to lose contact with the other members of the body. They no longer are fed by what every part of the body is fed by and supported by.

Saints listen to what Paul had to say about this in Galatians 1:8 where he wrote, “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have*

preached to you, let him be accursed.” So tell me again why I should believe what is written in the book called the **Koran** or the book of **Mormon** when both Mohamed and Joseph Smith claim a different gospel delivered to them by an angel? Cased closed!

IV. Vs. 20-23 Legalism

Vs. 20-23 Paul gives us the perfect simple definition of legalism: **Do not...do not...do not...** Our faith is a moral faith with clear boundaries but its foundation is positive not negative. Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 10:23 *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.”*

3. Vs. 20-23 **Legalism**: Paul was no doubt countering a false belief system that insisted that the renunciation of worldly pleasures made it possible to achieve a higher spiritual and intellectual state. This type of false teaching is an over developed dedication and discipline that has led to extreme self-denial that the Bible doesn't demand. When this happens people make a god out of their discipline and it has been seen in monasteries where they live a life devoid of any pleasure including communication with each other all because they believe that this is what God wants. There is three things wrong with this view:
 - a. **Wrong View**: Everything is negative, don't touch, don't taste, don't handle!
Pleasing God is not in giving up things it is in giving yourself to God.
Holiness is never achieved by self-effort it is ours by dying to self all together!
The legalist says, *“Everything is wrong unless you can prove by the Bible that it is right.”* But God's word says, *“Everything is right, unless the Bible specifically says it is wrong.”*

- b. **Temporary**: Next Paul says in verse 22 that all this will perish with the using. In other words you start out motivated but 9 time out of 10 you go back to what you were denying because it was based upon self-effort and false teaching to start with. People may praise it and even try to emulate it but it is all temporary.
- c. **No lasting change**: Finally Paul says that this all just a façade, an appearance of wisdom but is just self-imposed religion, false humility and of no value against the indulgences of the flesh. If we try to regulate the externals instead of walking in the fullness and freshness of a life in Christ we will never be able to clean the dirt off our lives. The best way to clean a dirty vessel is turn on the water and let it do all the work.

All three of these errors will only cause us to lose the only One that we truly need to achieve a higher spiritual plane, Jesus! Don't make your life about a list of don'ts make it about a life of Christ!