

March 29, 2020

Pastor Steve Hardy

Hold On To Christ
Colossians 2:16-23

Imagine someone struggling out in the water, obviously in danger of drowning. Hands extend offering assistance—one offers a life ring, the other a rock! Which would you choose? The rules and rituals of religion, apart from Christ, are like a rock to a drowning man. They cannot save from the penalty for sin, nor from the power of sin. Hold on to Christ!

I. Rules and rituals **REFLECT** the reality that is in Christ, Colossians 2:16-17.

- A. The first problem was **JUDGEMENT** related to **RULES-KEEPING**.
- B. The rules were a **SHADOW** of what is **FULFILLED** in Christ, see Hebrews 10.
- C. What matters is **CHRIST**, who is the **REALITY**.

II. Rules and rituals cannot **REPLACE** the reality that is in Christ, Colossians 2:18-19.

- A. The second problem was the danger of **DISQUALIFICATION** through **LETTING GO** of Christ.
- B. Christ alone is the source of true **LIFE** for the **WHOLE BODY**.
- C. What matters is **GROWTH** that comes from **GOD**.

III. Rules and rituals will never **REMOVE** or **REDEEM** sinful flesh, 2:20-23.

- A. A third problem is trying to have **VICTORY OVER SIN** apart from **DEATH TO SIN**, see also Romans 6:1-11.
- B. This amounts to **HUMAN-SOURCED RELIGION** which is **POWERLESS**.
- C. What is necessary is **LIFE IN CHRIST** and pursuit of **THINGS ABOVE**, see Colossians 3:1-4.

Salvation, from the power of sin as well as the penalty for sin, is found in Jesus Christ. While religious practices (rules and rituals) hold some value for those who are holding on to Christ, they are powerless to save apart from Christ. The "dead in trespasses" must be "made alive together with him", Jesus Christ, through faith, and go on to pursue the things above.

Family Time:

Every family has rules and rituals they follow (or try to follow). Name a few of yours as a family and discuss the purpose or intent behind the rule or ritual. Do the rules or rituals have power themselves? Why is "heart" (often we might say "spirit" or "attitude") important for their effectiveness? As it relates to God's "rules" (standards of holiness), what is the importance of heart transformation that only Jesus can accomplish? See Jeremiah 31:31-34.

For Further Study, Thought, and Discussion:

1. People in Paul's day would "pass judgment" with regard to "questions of food and drink" because there were standards of holiness reflected in dietary regulations. How did Jesus clarify what was important beyond mere keeping of rules, in Matthew 15:1-20? If rules are a shadow of the substance that belongs to Christ (Col 2:16-17), then should there be either rules without Christ, or Christ without rules? How would this apply to those who are serious about following Christ?
2. Our relationship with Jesus is based on personal faith, creating a direct connection with him by faith. So in what way could someone else "disqualify you" (Col 2:18)—can they really, or is this just in their judgment (as in v. 16)? How might the idea of being disqualified relate to the idea of "not holding fast to the Head" (Jesus, 2:19)? How does this relate to Col 1:21-23, continuing in the faith and holding to the hope of the gospel? The danger Paul is addressing came from false teachers; explain how they might "disqualify" someone, and who might be in danger of disqualification. How might this parallel the concern, yet confidence regarding his readers, expressed by the writer in Hebrews 6:1-12?
3. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul speaks about how he "exercises self-control in all things" and "disciplines his body" to keep it under control. "Discipline" sounds like rules. How is this different from the point he is making in Colossians 2:20-23? If rules don't help or don't empower one to stop the "indulgence of the flesh", what will? In Col 3, beginning at v. 5, Paul will begin to emphasize things we are to do to practice holiness. What must happen before one can do these things—what power do they need (see v. 19)?

NEXT WEEK: Palm Sunday Communion