

STANDING AGAINST SPIRITUAL INTIMIDATION (Part One)

Colossians 2:16-23

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Introduction:

Intimidation is threatening or terrorizing behavior from someone who has a real or imagined power that causes us to be afraid of doing what we believe is right. cf. Ezekiel 34; 1 Peter 3:13-16

Too many have tried to sway believers from the true Gospel of Grace....

Colossians 2:8 "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

- Stand Against Legalism (Colossians 2:16-17) Legalism = faith + man-made rules
- Stand Against Mysticism (Colossians 2:18-19) Mysticism = faith + feelings
- Stand Against Asceticism (Colossians 2:20-23) Asceticism = faith + self-inflicted suffering

The Gospel vs. The Religion of Human Achievement

Colossians 2:16-23 "Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day--things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence."

1. STANDING AGAINST THOSE WHO INTIMIDATE THROUGH LEGALISM

Colossians 2:16-17 "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."

A. THE LEGALISTS

Faith in Christ + man-made rules = true spirituality

B. THE LEGALISTS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

- Legalists in the first years of the Church... cf. Acts 15 re: the first real threat to the Gospel
- Spiritual intimidators in the Church of Colossae...

Colossians 2:16-17 "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."

Romans 14:17 "...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Acts 10:15 "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy."

Gal. 4:9 "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"

Gal. 5:1 "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

C. THE LEGALISTS TODAY

Regarding modern man's attempt to please God by human effort...

Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

Regarding legalism among modern evangelicals...

It is not legalism to have personal convictions about matters not expressly stated or forbidden in Scripture. It is legalism when we insist others do.

Regarding the tension between legalism and loose living...

Romans 6:1 "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?"

God hates legalism...

1 Timothy 4:1-5 "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, *men* who forbid marriage *and* *advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer."

C. GOD'S ANSWER TO THE LEGALISTS OF ALL AGES

1. Our Stand Colossians 2:16 "Therefore let no one act as your judge..."

- Don't sacrifice your freedom in Christ for a list of man-made rules.
- Don't let anyone judge your standing before God.
- Don't let anyone measure your spirituality by mere externals

2. The Reason Colossians 2:17 "...things which are a mere shadow of what is to come..."

- Legalism has the form of Christianity but not the substance.
- Legalism simply doesn't bring the refreshment that our souls crave.
- Legalism doesn't restrain the promptings of our deceitfully wicked hearts.

"...but the substance belongs to Christ."

Galatians 2:19-21 "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

The Substantive Life is one that is...

- ... guided by the Indwelling Holy Spirit; not legislated by the external Law.
- ... transformed on the outside because the Rule-Maker lives inside.

Galatians 5:8 "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."

Concluding Challenge:

- Don't be intimidated by the legalists.
- Don't let anyone act as your judge.
- Don't let anyone play Holy Spirit in your life.

"A man who is intimate with God is not intimidated by man." (Leonard Ravenhill)

Next time in Part Two

II. STANDING AGAINST THOSE WHO INTIMIDATE THROUGH MYSTICISM