

STANDING AGAINST SPIRITUAL INTIMIDATION (Part Three)

(Colossians 2:16-23)

Dr. Jim Cecy

Introduction:

Here in Colossians 2:16-23 the Apostle Paul is warning his fellow Christians of the changing theological tide, the whirlpool of false doctrine and the vortex of man-made religion that is threatening to suck believers in.

Review of Part One and Two:

I. STANDING AGAINST THOSE WHO INTIMIDATE THROUGH LEGALISM

Legalism = faith in Christ + man-made rules = true spirituality

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.”

II. STANDING AGAINST THOSE WHO INTIMIDATE THROUGH MYSTICISM

Mysticism = faith in Christ + subjective experience = true spirituality

Colossians 2:18-19 “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.”

Now in Part Three

III. STANDING AGAINST THOSE WHO INTIMIDATE THROUGH ASCETICISM

Asceticism = faith in Christ + self-imposed suffering = true spirituality

Colossians 2:20-23 “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 use)—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.”

A. THE ASCETIC

The Christian ascetic is one who believes that in order to get saved or stay saved you must trust in Christ plus engage in on-going, often self-inflicted practices of self denial and suffering.

Inward Disciplines (1 Timothy 4:7) vs. External Asceticism

B. THE ASCETICS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

cf. Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

Regarding first-century dualism...

Lifestyle #1. Libertinism = “Indulge the body. Let it do what it craves. It’s all evil anyways. — so anything goes.”

Lifestyle #2. Asceticism = “Buffet the body. Keep it under tight control. It’s evil — so punish it severely.”

Colossians 2:20b-22 “... 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 use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?”

Asceticism throughout the ages...

Note: Penance is an act of self-abasement or self-punishment performed to show sorrow or repentance for sin. It is also a method some believe is useful to keep sinful urges under control.

C. THE ASCETICS TODAY

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.”

Penitential Robe #1. "The more I suffer the better Christian I am."

An abuse of 2 Timothy 2:3 "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

An abuse of Romans 8:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

The issue throughout the Scriptures is not suffering — but a willingness to suffer.

Penitential Robe #2. "The Evangelical Vow of Poverty"

An abuse of 1 Timothy 6:10 "The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil".

Penitential Robe #3. "Jesus never laughed. Nor should we."

An abuse of James 4:9 "Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom."

1 Timothy 4:4 "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."

Penitential Robe #4. "When I relax, I feel guilty"

An abuse of Ephesians 5:16 "...making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

D. GOD'S ANSWER TO THE ASCETICS OF ALL AGES

1. Our Stand

Colossians 2:20-22 "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 use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?"

2. Our Reason

Reason #1. We have died with Christ

Colossians 2:20-21 "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!"

Reason #2. These ascetic practices are destined to perish

Colossians 2:22a "... (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)..."

Reason #3. These ascetic practices are man-made

Colossians 2:22b "—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?"

Reason #4. These ascetic practices only have the appearance of true spirituality

Colossians 2:23a "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..."

Reason #5. These ascetic practices are useless

Colossians 2:23b "...of no value against fleshly indulgence."

- They are useless against fleshly indulgence
- They are useless because they appeal to man's pride

"There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us and that is the power of the indwelling Christ." (Alexander Maclaren)

MAKING OUR CHOICE

A life of legalism with its man-made rules

or

A life controlled daily by the indwelling Holy Spirit

A life of mysticism with its emphasis on subjective feelings

or

A life centered daily in the objective Word of God

A life of asceticism with its self-imposed suffering

or

A life centered daily in God's will — accepting whatever life God plans for us.

"The substance of our lives belongs to Christ. Everything else is a mere shadow."