



FOR PEOPLE ON THE GROW "Free to Be What?" Colossians 2:16-23

No. 5031

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The Colossian Christians were being troubled by people who were confusing them and hindering their spiritual progress. Paul spoke forcibly to the issue, and in so doing, he reminds us that we should be on our guard against those who would be less than helpful to our spiritual lives.

I. Bondage that Should Be Avoided.

- A. The bondage of legalism.
 - 1. "What you must not do." v. 16a
 - a. Prohibitions on eating and drinking.
 - 2. "What you must do." v. 16b
 - a. Meticulous observance, annually, monthly, weekly.
 - 3. Paul's rebuttal – "Don't let them judge you." v. 17
 - a. Because they confuse shadow and substance.
 - b. Because they substitute ritual for reality.
- B. The bondage of elitism.
 - 1. Elitist attitudes – "Delights in false humility." v. 18a
 - 2. Elitist activities – "Worship of angels." v. 18b
 - 3. Elitist claims – "What he has seen." v. 18c; cf. 2 Corinthians 12:4
 - 4. Paul's rebuttal – "Don't let them disqualify you." vv. 18, 19
 - a. Because they are not spiritual people.
 - b. Because they are arrogant and empty.
 - c. Because they lost contact with the Head.
 - d. Because they lost sight of the Body.
- C. The bondage of asceticism.
 - 1. The "dogmatics" of asceticism. v. 20
 - 2. The specifics of asceticism. v. 21
 - 3. Paul's rebuttal – "Why do you submit?" v. 20
 - a. Because physical things "perish with use."
 - b. Because the system is of man, not God.
 - c. Because there is more show than substance.

II. Basics that Should Be Remembered.

- A. The basic reality of Christ.
 - 1. In Him is reality. v. 17
 - 2. In Him is centrality. vv. 2, 3
 - 3. In Him is authority. v. 10
- B. The basic reality of the church. v. 19
 - 1. The controlling factor.
 - 2. The connecting factor.
 - 3. The coordinating factor.
- C. The basic reality of the cross. v. 20
 - 1. Christ died for you. vv. 13, 14
 - 2. You died with Christ. v. 20
 - 3. Don't be dominated by what you died to. See v. 23

III. Balance that Should Be Maintained.

- A. God's truth is found in tension.
- B. Heresies solve tension by extremism.
- C. Paul cautions against the latter and teaches the former.
 - 1. Legalism is out but license is not in.
 - 2. Elitism is out but mediocrity is not endorsed.
 - 3. Asceticism is out but ill discipline is not acceptable.