

Living It Out - Colossians - Lesson 8 - Study Notes



Read Colossians 2:16-23

Video Notes:

Instead of a video this week, I will just add some notes here for you...

Because of what Christ has done for them, Paul instructs the Colossians to not let anyone judge them. Apparently, there were some people in this church who were criticizing others because they didn't observe certain religious practices, such as dietary laws (food and drink) and special days (festival, new moon, Sabbath day). The keeping of such rules were very much a part of the Old Testament law. Many people, especially Jewish Christians, were having difficulty understanding that their salvation was not tied to the observances of such rules. The false teachers at Colosae preyed upon this misunderstanding, attempting to force these laws upon the church. But Paul reminded the church that these regulations were merely "a shadow of what was to come" – the arrival of the Messiah. Paul explained to them that since they had the Messiah, they were now complete in Him and there was no need for strict laws or observance of special days.

Living It Out

As I read this passage, the word Legalism came to my mind. In Christianity, legalism is the excessive and improper use of the law (10 commandments, holiness laws, etc.). This legalism can take different forms. The first is where a person attempts to keep the Law in order to attain salvation. The second is where a person keeps the law in order to maintain his salvation. The third is when a Christian judges other Christians for not keeping certain codes of conduct that he thinks need to be observed. Simply put, legalism focusses on what we do – on external behavior.

If you connect verse 15 with verses 16-17, this passage is talking about believers being delivered from evil powers which inspire legalistic rules. Christians are free from having to follow Law requirements. Christ's death on the cross and resurrection gave us freedom from having to follow the laws.

Here are several things to do this week:

1. Read Romans 8:1-8 and Hebrews 10:1-8. Why shouldn't we revert back to following the religious Law to please God? Write your answer here. _____

Genuine Christians can be deceived by false teaching, even teaching concerning Christ. Is there some concept that you have about God, Christ, salvation, the church or the Christian life that is not based on Scripture, but on man-made tradition or philosophy? Write it (them) down. Will you give it up and accept the truth of God's Word alone? Ask someone to hold you accountable concerning this during this next week.

2. Read the following quote (lengthy, but good!) from the *Women's Evangelical Commentary – New Testament* and prayerfully answer the questions.

"In your attempts to be the "perfect" woman, whether as a wife, mother, church member, or employee, often you impose upon yourself a personal list of "regulations" and "human commands" (Colossians 2:20,22). Failing to achieve these super-human standards can become a source of much anxiety and grief. Although it is not easy, you as believers need to free yourselves from these bonds of legalism for, as Colossians 2:23 says, they are not of any value. If God's grace has given you eternal life, then why do you attempt to live that life by your rules? Having been saved by grace, you must live by grace. Instead of looking to your own fabricated standards of "perfection", which no one on earth could attain, you must look to Christ. He has fulfilled all of God's law on your behalf so that you do not have to meet the standards of the law, and He lives eternally to empower you day by day with His grace and mercy."

Here are some questions for you to prayerfully ask yourself:

- Do I judge anyone's spiritual life based on their external behavior?
- Do I have a check list of things that I require to answer "yes" to, in order for me to think that I or anyone else is a good Christian? Are these things Biblical?
- Do I think that if I do a certain amount of good things – go to church, attend a Bible study, pray, help my neighbor, etc.- that I will know true fulfillment?
- Do I think of Christ more like a drill Sargent than a real friend?

3. Read Colossians 2:16-23 again from a different translation.

Think about this:

The picture that Paul is trying to paint here is that Christ is all you need for both your salvation and your spiritual growth. Man centered activity looks good and makes people feel better...well....at least for a while. BUT...it is of no value to God! When you focus on Jesus Christ alone, developing a personal friendship by spending time with Him, His life will provide you the roadmap you need to live the life He wants you to live. You don't have to have a "to-do-list", or go through the motions of a Christian life. As your friendship with Christ grows, you will personally experience His presence and His grace and be more and more like Him. And guess what else will happen? You will willingly extend grace to others just like Paul did to the Colossians church.

Spend some time today praising God for being completely all you need.

What steps will you take this week to apply this lesson into your everyday life? Write the steps below.