

Out of the Shadows

Colossians 2:16-17, 20-23

Brief Sermon Outline - Review and Compare Notes

1. Encouragement: Freedom in Christ (16a)
2. Examples: Jewish Rituals (16b)
 - Diet
 - Festivals/Feasts
 - Calendar/Sabbath
3. Explanation: Shadows vs. Substance (17)
4. Elaboration: Where's the Power? (20-23)

Introduction

Since we've been away from Colossians for a while, it is a good idea to re-read what may be considered the thesis statement of the book: Col 1:16-20.

^{ESV} **Colossians 1:16-20** For by¹ him all things were created, ^ain heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether ^bthrones or ^cdominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created ^dthrough him and for him. ¹⁷ And ^ahe is before all things, and in him all things ^bhold together. ¹⁸ And ^ahe is the head of the body, the church. He is ^bthe beginning, ^cthe firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For ^ain him all the ^bfullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and ^athrough him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, ^bmaking peace ^cby the blood of his cross.

Keep this "big view" of Christ (preeminent over all things) always in view.

This week's text:

^{ESV} **Colossians 2:16** Therefore let no one ^apass judgment on you ^bin questions of food and drink, or with regard to ^ca festival or ^da new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ ^aThese are a shadow of the things to come, but ^bthe substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one ^adisqualify you, ^binsisting on asceticism and worship of angels, ^cgoing on in detail about visions, ¹⁹ ^dpuffed up without reason by ^ehis sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and ^anot ^bholding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. ²⁰ If with Christ ^ayou died to the ^belemental spirits of the world, ^cwhy, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations-- ²¹ ^a"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" ²² (^areferring to things that all perish as they are used)--according to ^bhuman precepts

and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in ^apromoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are ^bof no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Discussion 1: In Him -- (a.k.a. *What's the "Therefore" There For?*)

This week's text starts with a "therefore" and an imperative.¹ Take some time and review what it means to "walk in him" (2:6)

[This is not an exhaustive list... only the previous few verses. We'll see more later on in the study.

In Him we have:

- solid foundation (v.7a)
- cause for thanksgiving (v.7b)
- the whole fullness of deity dwelling bodily (v.9)
- source of our filling (v.10a)
- the chief authority (v.10b)
- we have circumcision (putting off of the flesh v.11)
- we've been buried (v.12a)
- we've been raised (v.12b,13)
- we have forgiveness (v.14)
- victory over enemies (v.15)

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Discussion 2: Christian Freedom

This week's text focuses on religious freedom with respect to old covenant ceremonial law. Earlier in chapter two there were warnings against "captivity" with man-made religion (2:8). *We'll get more personal about Christian freedom later.*

^{ESV} **Colossians 2:8** See to it that no one takes you captive by ^aphilosophy and ^bempty deceit, according to ^chuman tradition, according to the ^delemental spirits¹ of the world, and not according to Christ.

- ***In Paul's earlier warning, why does he say we don't need man-made religion?***

[This is what prompted the "in Him" list Paul gives. Pay special note to v.10-- there is nothing lacking (that needs to be filled by man) when we are *in Christ*.]

- ***Upon what basis are we free from ceremonial law?***

[These are fulfilled in Christ. They were but foreshadows of Christ. How are we to view OT ceremonial law? The book of Hebrews describes Christ's

¹ Review if needed: "indicative" - *indicates* what is (statements of fact or truth); "imperative" - commands (memory aid: "it is *imperative* that you do this")

superiority to all of the rituals of the ceremonial law and uses the shadows language.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 8:5** They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 10:1** For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Here we'll examine some ways we see this addressed in the New Testament.

^{ESV} **Colossians 2:16** Therefore let no one ^apass judgment on you ^bin questions of food and drink, or with regard to ^ca festival or ^da new moon or a Sabbath.]

– *Circumcision*

[Here we have one that is addressed directly in 2:11 and gives a good example of how other ceremonial law issues should be viewed. Paul expands on it in his letter to the Galatians. (Yes, there are still people who make circumcision a topic of religious debate.)

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:1-12** For ^afreedom Christ has ^bset us free; ^cstand firm therefore, and do not submit again to ^da yoke of ^eslavery. ² Look: I, Paul, say to you that ^aif you accept circumcision, ^bChrist will be of no advantage to you. ³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that ^ahe is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are ^asevered from Christ, ^byou who would be justified¹ by the law; ^cyou have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly ^await for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For ***in Christ*** Jesus ^aneither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but ^bonly faith working through love. ⁷ ^aYou were running well. Who hindered you from obeying ^bthe truth? ⁸ This persuasion is not from ^ahim who calls you. ⁹ ^aA little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ ^aI have confidence in the Lord that you will ^btake no other view than mine, and ^cthe one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹ But if I, brothers,¹ still preach² circumcision, ^awhy am I still being persecuted? In that case ^bthe offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish ^athose who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Note:

- *the “in Christ” language*
- *going back (to ceremonial law) is viewed as contrary to obeying the truth (9)*
- *Paul’s description of those who are pointing people back to the shadows as “troublers” or “unsettlers” (10,12) ... and what they should do to themselves--yikes!*

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– *Diet*

[OT. Lev 11 and Deut 14. Acts 10:10-28--God is preparing Peter to accept, receive, be received by, and minister to Gentiles, but the dietary implications are clear. They are also evident in freedom with respect to

food sacrificed to idols²--unthinkable prior to Christ, but now reconciled in Christ. Peter tells the story:

^{ESV} **Acts 11:7-9** And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'⁸ But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.'

^{ESV} **Colossians 1:19-20** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

– *Festivals/Feasts*

[Christ is the fulfillment of the festivals and feasts. Passover gives us the prime example.

^{ESV} **Luke 22:15** And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it¹ until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."¹⁷ And he took a cup, and^a when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves."¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine^y until the kingdom of God comes."¹⁹ ^{ay} And he took bread, and^a when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ^d"This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ^a"This cup that is poured out for you is^b the new^c covenant in my blood."

The Lord's Supper is the fulfillment of Passover (*Exo 12:14 fulfilled*). *To go back would be, like with circumcision, to make Christ of no account.*

– *Sabbath*

^{ESV} **Matthew 11:28** ^aCome to^b me, all who labor and are^c heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[The writer to the Hebrews exhorts his readers to *enter in* to the Sabbath rest provided by Christ. After three chapters describing Jesus as superior to the angels and that he is our Apostle and High Priest, he pleads with them to not harden their hearts against Christ, as their fathers hardened their hearts against YHWH in the wilderness. Because of their unbelief, God denied that generation access to the holy land, "They shall not enter into My rest" (Heb 3:11). The author of Hebrews exhorts them (and us) not to make the same mistake by rejecting God's Sabbath rest in Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 4:9** So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also^a rested from his works as God did from his.¹¹

² 1 Cor 8:4-13; 10:23-31--Paul expands on this. Note how those who look back are called the "weaker" brothers. There are a lot of "one another" implications here. Is this a call to cater to weakness or strengthen the weak?

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so ^athat no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

^{ESV} **Romans 14:5** ^aOne person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. ^bEach one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Discussion 3: Is Christ Enough for You?

Ryan spoke of the appeal and dangers of legalism.

– *Why is legalism attractive to you?*

[Leaders, lead out in confession and repentance here. If people are saying “it isn’t attractive to me” it is most likely they do not yet understand the breadth of it (and the underlying pride and idolatry).

- We want our laws (do’s and don’ts) to be *concrete, tangible, black and white*.
- We want to know that we’ve done them, and whether we can check them off and feel good. (the “sinner’s prayer”
- We want to know whether others have done them or not and who stands where.
- We like to be in control, do our part, see if we (or others) are measuring up.]

– *Are we judging one another wrongly?*

[Discuss areas where Christians are judging one another based on man-made rules. Alcohol use, dancing, entertainment venues/forms, style of dress, ... etc. Some of these are deeply engrained in pop-church culture, but without Biblical basis.]

– *Important follow-up: Nature of Christian Freedom (Are we judging rightly?)*

[If you preach grace as radically as Paul did (and we do), you will get objections. A common one has to do with “license” to sin. Paul uses his imaginary objector (literary tool) to address this directly in Romans 6 (*the whole chapter*). Note the “into Christ” language (including death and resurrection symbolized in baptism) and how he uses it to demonstrate the absurdity of the question. If someone is asking, “shall I continue in sin?” they’re still in captivity to sin. *Question*: “You mean I can do what I want?” *Answer*: “What do you *want* to do?” (ref. Rom 7)

– *Are there limitations to Christian freedom?*

[Of course³, and they fall into two categories:

- 1) Things that violate God's moral laws (not the ones we make up!). Jesus not only taught these, but extended to scope of them to our thoughts as well as our actions (Sermon on the Mount--Matt. 5). *Don't confuse temptation with follow-through. To be tempted is not sin, to dwell on and fantasize about it is. Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!*
- 2) Things that cause others to stumble.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 10:23** ^a"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴ ^aLet no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

This and other texts (see footnote 2), if we are not careful, can lead right back into legalism. Pray for wisdom and discernment!]

- *Do we need more external observances? (Old Testament Jewish feasts, rituals, etc.)*

[We have been given two wonderful sacraments to continue: the Lord's Supper and Baptism. They are given to remind us and commemorate the fullness we have *in Christ*. We can learn a lot by studying these festivals to see how the foreshadowed, and were fulfilled in Christ, but the moment they cross the line from informative to an imperative (something we should do), it is legalism.]

- *But what about those DSC Passover Seder Dinners⁴?*

[This is the opposite of "going back" to observe a Jewish ritual. It is not an observance of the ritual (*yeast is not removed from the house...*), nor is it something that is commanded by our Lord to observe. It is a teaching time (partial reenactment pointing forward) and is explicitly ordered to demonstrate the very truths we are discussing here. It is filled with descriptions of how each part of the ceremony pointed to Christ, was fulfilled in Christ, and how the Lord's Supper fulfills and supersedes Passover. The first words of the DSC Seder dinner: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Cor 5:7)]

³ Believers in the security of the believer are sometimes accused of fatalistic "it doesn't matter what I do, Jesus will save me anyway" (hyper-Calvinism). Scripture teaches ***both*** the Sovereignty of God in salvation ***and*** the responsibility of man for his actions.

⁴ Interested in leading a Seder dinner with your CG? Contact Rags at tim@objectivegospel.org



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Introduction

Re-read Col 1:16-20. *Keep this "big view" of Christ (preeminent over all things) always in view.* Now read Col 2:16-23.

Discussion 1: In Him (Col 2:6-15)

Discussion 2: Christian Freedom (Col 2:8; Col 2:16)

- *In Paul's earlier warning, why does he say we don't need man-made religion?*

- *Upon what basis are we free from ceremonial law?*

- **Circumcision (ref. Gal. 5:1-12)**

Note:

- the “in Christ” language
- going back (to ceremonial law) is viewed as contrary to obeying the truth (9)
- Paul’s description of those who are pointing people back to the shadows as “troublers” or “unsettlers” (10,12)

- **Diet (ref. Acts 10:10-28; 11:7-9; Col 1:19-20)**

- **Festivals/Feasts (Passover--Luke 22:15-20)**

- **Sabbath (Matt 11:28; Rom 4; Heb 4:9-11; Rom 14:5)**

Discussion 3: Is Christ Enough for You?

- **Why is legalism attractive to you?**
- **Are we judging one another wrongly?**
 - Important follow-up: Nature of Christian Freedom (Rom 6)
 - Are there limitations to Christian freedom? (Matt 5; 1 Cor 10:23-24)
- **Do we need more external observances? (Old Testament Jewish feasts, rituals, etc.)**
- **What about those DSC Passover Seder Dinners?**