

The Danger of Man-Made Religion

Colossians 2:22-23

05/17/15
by Bob DeWaay

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Gospel of Grace Fellowship

May 17, 2015

The False Commands of Human Law-givers

Colossians 2:22 (NRSV)

All these regulations refer to things that **perish** with use; **they are simply human commands** and teachings.

- “These regulations” are Paul’s subject in verses 22, 23
- “Perish” is “corruption” and means “physical dissolution”
- Such “human commands” are not according to Christ (Col. 2:8)

The Danger of Man-Made Religion: Colossians 2:22, 23

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The Danger of Self-Imposed Piety

Colossians 2:23a (NRSV)

These have indeed an **appearance of wisdom** in promoting **self-imposed piety**

- “These” refers to human commands
- They seem to have “wisdom” but are worthless
- They come from “the philosophy” (Col. 2:8)
- People are easily deceived by what **appears pious**

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"Self-Chosen Piety"

Self-chosen piety = *thelo_thre_skia* in the Greek

- "Thelo_" means "will" in the Greek
- "thre_skia" means "worship" (Used in Col. 2:18)
- In this case, **man decides** how he will worship God
- In the Bible **God decides** how we must worship Him
- This issue goes back to the Garden of Eden
- This is also illustrated at the Tower of Babel

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False Humility

Colossians 2:23b (NRSV)

humility, and **severe treatment** of the body . . .

- "humility" here is shown to be false humility by the context
- This false humility was likely used in Asia Minor as a means to obtain visions and mysteries
- They had **their own program** of ascetic practices
- Harsh treatment of the body was supposed to enhance spirituality

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Their "Honor" Was Useless

Colossians 2:23c (NRSV)

but they are of **no value** in checking self-indulgence

- "No value" is literally "not in honor"
- They thought they could be honored and more pious than others
- Since we died with Christ (verse 20) we should see that this false approach is useless
- The flesh is still in control of ascetics

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Implications and Applications

- We must avoid vain worship
- We must come to God on His terms only
- Asceticism cannot deliver anyone from the flesh

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Human Tradition Is Vain Worship

Mark 7:7, 8 (NASB)

'But in **vain** do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' Neglecting the commandment of God, **you hold to the tradition of men.**

- We must listen to Jesus
- However venerable and wise **human traditions** are, **they cannot bring us to God**
- Mark 7:13 warns about invalidating the Word of God

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Coming to God on His Terms

John 14:6 (NASB)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father, but through Me.**"

Hebrews 7:25 (NASB)

Hence, also, **He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him**, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

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Asceticism Is Worthless

1Timothy 4:8 (NASB)

for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but **godliness is profitable for all things**, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

- We cannot make ourselves spiritual by rigorous bodily discipline (harsh treatment)
- Beating one's body will not make us godly!

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Believe the Promises of God

2Peter 1:3, 4 (NASB)

seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us **His precious and magnificent promises**, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, **having escaped the corruption** that is in the world by lust.

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