



### **Growth Group Questions: May 7, 2023 – “False Teaching and The Church”**

In these verses the apostle Paul expands on the “hollow teaching” that he alluded to in Colossians 2:8. Paul takes on several topics that concerned him with the false teaching that was emerging in Colossae. One of the issues was around diet restrictions and the observation of religious days. These topics had already been dealt with at the Jerusalem Council which occurred around 12 years before Paul wrote this letter. That Council had determined what was essential and a kosher diet and observation of certain days were not deemed as essential for salvation.

Paul refers to these regulations as a “shadow” of things to come. The Jewish law had helped point people to God, but the law could not save. Only Jesus could actually bring salvation. Jesus was the substance of salvation and not a mere shadow. Paul would argue in Galatians 3:19-20 that the law was temporary and inferior. Thus, when church leaders were adding laws to the gospel message, Paul said, you simply cannot do that.

In verse 18 Paul warns about losing the prize of their commitment to Christ. They were going to be disqualified. They were going to lose the joy that was promised to them through Jesus. There appear to be some false teachers who claimed that they had a “way” to help people have a higher spiritual experience of God – they could teach others how to worship God as the angels did. Paul wanted to emphasize that experience was just another add on to Jesus and the salvation that he offered to all.

These false teachers were actually disconnecting themselves from God and thus there is no way they could grow in their faith or help others grow in their faith. The church would not be able to grow in Christ if it continued down this path. The church would become more concerned about works righteousness than the righteousness that comes from Jesus.

False teaching was rampant in the early church as we can see by the letters that were written in the New Testament. When people in the church look to worldly things to measure their spirituality they risk placing those things above the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross. Paul does not want the church in Colossae falling into that trap.



## **Scriptures:**

### **Colossians 2:15**

<sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.<sup>[a]</sup>

### **Colossians 2:8**

<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces<sup>[a]</sup> of this world rather than on Christ.

### **Colossians 2:16-23**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. <sup>18</sup> Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. <sup>19</sup> They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

<sup>20</sup> Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: <sup>21</sup> “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? <sup>22</sup> These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. <sup>23</sup> Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

### **Luke 18:9-14**

<sup>9</sup> To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup> “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ <sup>13</sup> “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ <sup>14</sup> “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

### **Galatians 5:7-8**

<sup>7</sup> You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup> That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

### **Psalms 127:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. <sup>2</sup> In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to<sup>[a]</sup> those he loves.

## **Questions:**

1. As you read Colossians 2:15, what do you consider to be the main theme of this verse? What do you think the Apostle Paul was saying to the Colossians?



2. In Colossians 2:8, the Apostle Paul gives a clear warning to the Christians in the Colossian church. What was this warning? Is this warning still applicable to us today?
3. What does the Apostle Paul mean in Colossians 2:17, when he says: “These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however is found in Christ.”?
4. In Colossians 2:20-23, the Apostle Paul warns us against legalism or the belief that we need to follow certain rules or regulations in addition to believing in the grace of God for our salvation. In the Colossian Church, many of these rules or regulations were based upon Old Testament laws. What are some of the rules or regulations we may see today that would fit into the definition of “legalism”?
5. What does it mean that God’s grace is sufficient? Why do you think so many people find it attractive to believe in the concept of “grace plus” keeping other rules or regulations rather than in believing God’s grace is sufficient?
6. Pastor Paul said that “uptight legalism can get in the way of our relationship with Christ.” What do you think he meant by that?
7. How can we guard ourselves against “false teachings”?
8. What do you think is the key message of the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)? What can we learn from this scripture?
9. Psalm 127:1-2 contains both a warning and a promise. What is the warning? What is the promise? How does this scripture passage relate to the topic of this week’s sermon: “False Teaching and the Church”?

