

15. Learning How to Recognize False Teachings

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be complete in Christ. We saw that Christ gave us a new nature and that we are able to walk in newness of life as we yield to Him. We have also seen in other topics that Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us all things. In our topic today, we are going to see that Christ wants to help every Christian recognize teachings that are false so that we will not be deceived by them and led into bondage to those false teachings.

Colossians 2:13-15 we read, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Before we placed our faith in Christ, we were spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” At the moment of salvation, God gave us spiritual life and so we are alive together with Christ. It was necessary for God to give us that life because a dead person is totally unable to help himself. At that moment, all of our sins were also forgiven.

The word that is translated “having wiped out” means *to blot out, erase or wash away*. The word that is translated “handwriting” is the paper that a person signed when he borrowed money from someone else. The paper told how much the person owed and when that amount was due. The word translated “requirements” speaks of the penalties that the Old Testament had for those who disobeyed the Ten Commandments. When we put these words together, we see that when Christ forgave our sins, He blotted them out so that they would never be held against us. Those sins were all placed on Christ when He was nailed to the cross. There, Christ paid for them by shedding His blood. That is why they were blotted out at the moment we placed our faith in Christ.

By His death on the cross, Christ also disarmed all principalities and powers. The phrase “principalities and powers” is also used in Ephesians 6:12 where we read, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” Here, we see that we are in a spiritual conflict with Satan and his fallen angels (demons), but this verse tells us that they have already been disarmed. At the time that Paul wrote this letter, the Roman generals who conquered another nation would bring the soldiers of the conquered nation to Rome and make them march through the streets of Rome in chains to show that they were totally defeated. We want to help our children understand that Satan and all of his demons have already been defeated because Christ won the victory over them when He defeated death and rose from the grave.

Colossians 2:16-17 says, “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” Here, we see that the false teachers were trying to force the Gentile Christians to keep the Jewish laws. The writer of Hebrews explained this very clearly to the Jewish Christians when he said in Hebrews 9:9-10, “It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered

which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” Here, we see that the writer of Hebrews made it very clear that these things could never provide salvation.

These rules were imposed on the Jews until the time of reformation. The word that is translated “reformation” means *to make something straight that was broken or misshaped*. Food, drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths were all like a shadow to guide the Jews. In these verses in Colossians, we see that these things were a shadow of things to come. A shadow is not the real thing but only shows that a real thing exists which is causing that shadow. Here, we see that Christ is not the shadow but the substance. The substance or body was used to speak of the thing that was causing the shadow. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” The rules imposed on the Jews were the shadow or tutor but Christ is the real thing. Christ is the only One who could take away sin and provide forgiveness.

That is why Colossians 2:18-19 goes on to say, “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.” The false teachers that had come to Colosse wanted to cheat the Christians. 2 John 1:7-8 says, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward.” Many false teachers try to deceive Christians by false teachings. Such teachings can only cause people to lose their spiritual freedom, which hinders their ministry and will prevent them from receiving a full reward.

Then we have some of the false teachings that were being taught to the Colossian Christians by false teachers. Two things that these false teachers taught were a false humility and worship of angels. Satan even tried to deceive Christ with a similar temptation. Matthew 4:8-10 says, “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.”’” Here, we see that Satan tried to get Christ to worship him. These false teachers were trying to tell the people to show their humility by worshiping angels instead of Christ.

These false teachers said that God had shown them these teachings by dreams or visions. This is a common characteristic of false teachers. Paul said that such false teachers are only puffed up (made proud) by their sinful minds. Such minds are described in Ephesians 4:17-18 where we read, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” We see that we also had such thoughts before Christ brought us into the light.

Now, we are to hold to Christ because He is the Head. Christ is the One who provides our nourishment. Christ is the One who joins all Christians together in one body. Christ is the One who causes us to grow with the true growth that comes from God.

Colossians 2:20-23 goes on to say, “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.” We saw in our last topic that we died with Christ and have been raised to newness of life. As a result, we are not to place ourselves under the religious rules of people.

Three common rules of false teachers are: Do not touch, do not taste, and do not handle. Here, we see that some religions tell people that they are not to touch certain things. They tell people that they are not to eat certain foods. They tell people not to handle certain things. All of these things will soon pass away because none of them are eternal. That is why we are to realize that these are the commandments and doctrines that have been added to religions by the leaders of those religions.

The real reason why people make such rules was explained by Christ in Matthew 6:16-18 where we read, “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Here, we see that such people adopt these rules to try and show others by outward actions that they are religious. Christ said that those who do such things are hypocrites. Their only reward is the praise of people for their religious activities.

These rules do not have any value against the indulgence of the flesh. Here, we see that the rules that people establish and try to follow have no value. The reason that they have no value is due to the fact that they may change some outward actions of a person but they do nothing to change the heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life.” Then Jeremiah 17:9 adds, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that the attitudes of the heart are the things that lead their lives. A godly heart will lead to a godly life that will have a great impact on the lives of others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to avoid false teachings and learn to develop a godly life.