

Free From Religion

Colossians 2:20-23

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— **21** “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” **22** (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? **23** These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Humans cannot seem to live without religion. Although we often do not understand the religions of the past or those around us, we also are guilty of creating our own religions. Popular thoughts and words among us right now sound like, “I don’t think God would...I think God is...This is the way God created me...”

Looking at Colossians 2 we see that there is:

I. **A Death That Has Freed You (20a)**

Christ did not merely die FOR you and FOR your sins, but we are told that we died WITH Christ. (Galatians 2:20; Romans 5:12). There was a corporate solidarity in our sin with Adam as well as our death with Christ. We have died to the world not just by being severed from sin, but being GIVEN freedom to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:9-14). Why do we keep going back to:

II. **A Life That Will Destroy You (v. 20b-23)**

It is our temptation and our desire for religion that causes us, who are saved by grace, to want to LIVE by rules. We create a religion that tells us we can somehow attain favor with God by having our quiet time every day or by being faithful to come to Bible study. Rather than enjoying our freedom to live for Christ and with Christ, we decide to go back to our lives of religion or rules. Those that recognize the danger of living by rules have a tendency to create a “Religion of Grace.” Some people reject rules and instead live by a grace that means what they want it to mean. They create a religion of a hierarchy of sins and their mantra is, “Do not judge me.” Both of these mindsets are actually man-made religions.

The focus on externals and not the heart; human teaching and not God’s teaching; self-defined wisdom rather than God’s wisdom all results in no power over sin. The creation of our own religion creates a deeper and deeper descent into sin. There is no power in religion. There is only power in the cross. Christ died and rose again and we have died with Him and to the world. Those that live in light of God’s revealed word, ultimately through His son, experience true freedom.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to have had corporate solidarity with Adam’s sin and with Christ’s death on the cross?
2. Explain the difference in thought between “died TO” and “died FROM” the elemental spirits of the world (Col. 2:20).
3. How is religion a life that will destroy us? (vv. 20b-23)
4. What does it mean to focus on externals rather than the heart?

5. How does not living in light of our freedom in Christ actually create a deeper descent into sin?

Going Deeper

1. How do you unconsciously create a man-made religion in your life?
2. Which way do you lean in your walk with Christ – toward a life of rules or a life of grace?
How can you reject both of those and live a life of freedom in Christ?
3. How can you practically guard against living by either rules or by a fake grace?