

Lesson 30
The Leavening of The Flesh
Col 2:16-23

Matt 16:6 Jesus warned against “leavening”. What are the problems that leavening creates in religious practice?

In this next passage of Scripture Paul warns the Colossians about adopting the ideas of men (leavening) about how to carry out religious devotion to God which veer sharply away from what God has prescribed.

I. The Worship That Men Prescribe

- a. Focuses upon the **externals**
 1. What one **eats and drinks**.
 2. The days and holy days and **style of worship** that one keeps.
 3. It seeks to control one’s **outward behavior**.
 4. Stresses things that are observable and gives the **appearance** of righteousness and true devotion to God. Matt 23:27-28
- b. It receives its **empowerment** from the flesh
 1. **Ignores** the reality of man’s sinful nature. Matt 23:25-26
 2. **Rooted** in the pride and arrogance of man. I John 2:15-17; Rev 3:17
 3. Makes man the definer of **true religion** rather than God. Matt 23:23-24
- c. It delves into the **unknowable**
 1. Attracts seekers of the mystical and those looking for **some new thing**. Acts 17:20-22; 1 John 2:19
 2. Promises **special knowledge** or experience beyond the norm. Col 2:18
 3. Promotes spiritual **elitism** and superiority over others. Mark 12:35-40
 4. Relies upon externals and experience rather than **faith**. Rom 1:17-23
- d. It is subject **to change** according to culture and time

II. The Worship That God Prescribes

- a. Rooted in a personal faith that acknowledges **Christ as Lord**. Rom 10:3-13
 1. His **person**
 2. His **work**
 3. His **sufficiency**
 4. His **faithfulness**
 5. His promise and **reward**
- b. Focuses upon the **inward truth** (reality) of the believer. John 14:15
 1. Flows from a personal recognition of the **need for a Savior**. Acts 16:30-31
 2. **Subjection** of the will to Christ in all things. Matt 6:10; 2 Cor 10:4-5
 3. Subordination (**death**) of the self to Christ. Matt 16:24-25
 4. Desire to grow and mature in the **things of God** over time. 1 Peter 2:2-3
- c. **Depends** utterly upon God.
 1. His **revelation** Luke. 10:21-22; 1 Cor 2:10-14
 2. His **sovereignty** and providence. Rom 8:28-31
 3. His **gifts**. 1 Cor 12:4-11
 4. His building (**results**). Matt 16:18; Col 2:19
- d. It remains constant **regardless** of culture and time. Gal 3:23-29

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III. Application:

We need to discern within ourselves any areas in which we have attempted to mix our own ideas about Christian practice with those that God has prescribed.

- a. Are there externals in which you trust to gain favor with God or to impress others?
- b. Have you become the judge of your own standing before God or do you allow His word to speak in judgment of your true condition?
- c. Which is the more convincing to you, your faith or your experience?
- d. Can you identify cultural ideas about how we should worship Christ that differ from the true spiritual worship outlined in Scripture?

Col 2:16-23. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. ¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. ¹⁹ He has 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. ²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? ²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ 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. (NIV)

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