**Sermon Title: The Priority of Christ Over Asceticism**

**Sermon Text: Colossians 2:20-23**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to realize the ineffectiveness of regulations to control the flesh.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 2 principles tied to the ineffectiveness of Asceticism.**

**Introduction:** This section today summarizes the first section of Chapter 2, of what life in Christ is not. Moving to Chapter 3-4:6, to what life in Christ is to be.

Paul deals with the problem of Asceticism, which according to the Bible Knowledge Commentary of the New Testament “is the pseudo-spiritual position that revels in rules of physical self-denial or self-humiliation, in order to control the flesh.” [**The Bible Knowledge Commentary of the New Testament, p. 679**]

The practice of Asceticism usually arises out of guilt. The Christian need to trust in the fact that Christ has provided forgiveness/reconciliation, therefore, the guilt has been removed by the cross (**Colossians 2:13-14**).

**I. The identity of the believer provides freedom from that which is perishing. V.20-22**

**II. The identity of the believer provides freedom from man-made religion. V.23**

**I. The identity of the believer provides freedom from that which is perishing. V.20-22 (v.11)**

Since the true believer has died in Christ, then they are free from the basic principles of this world.

A. Freedom from **worldly** principles. V.20a

Believers are no longer under obligation (by their fleshly inclinations or nature) to obey them. Only those who are alive to sin, need obey sin as a master.

**Romans 6:2-7** Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? **3** Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection, **6** knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. **7** For he who has died has been freed from sin.

1. Believers are no longer under the **condemnation** of the law’s requirements.

2. Believers are no longer to be deceived by **human** based philosophy.

3. Believers are no longer subject to **mystic** teachings or tendencies.

B. Freedom from worldly **regulations**. V.20b-22 (v.8)

Worldliness is defined as living the world’s rules, including those who have an appearance of humility and some “angelic appearances” as their source of truth.

(**Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25**)

**Titus 2:12** teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

**John 15:18-19** "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. **19** "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

**1 John 2:15-17** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that *is* in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world. **17** And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

**Romans 12:1-2** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. **2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The prohibitions found in v.21 are an increase in regulations from not touching to not handling. This same legalism was used by Satan with Eve’s carnal exaggerations, “You must not touch it, or you will die.” [**Ibid. 679**]

**Genesis 3:3** "but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said,`You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

**Genesis 2:16-17** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; **17** "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Paul quotes some of the purity and dietary laws imposed by false teachers, who were judging and disqualifying believers.

C. Freedom from **temporary** things that are perishing. V.22

These dietary and ceremonial regulations were merely physical and temporal with no power to regulate or control the fleshly desires, because once consumed it is destroyed.

Although the false teachers believed that their obligations, rules, and regulations promoted spirituality. Paul identifies these regulations as human commands, based on human wisdom, and the doctrines of fleshly unregenerated men.

**Isaiah 29:13** Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

**Colossians 2:8** Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides eternal freedom from such things, and with it the power of new life. (**Colossians 2:13-14**)

Asceticism is also known as a man-made system of rules (often taken out of context from God’s law). This then became human commands and teaching. Ex. Circumcision in the Old Testament vs. New Testament.

**II. The identity of the believer provides freedom from man-made religion. V.23**

A. Man-made religion is attractive because of its appearance of **wisdom**. V.23a

These things have an appearance of or reputation of wisdom in that they appear to provide insight and enlightenment in spiritual understanding. (**1:9; 2:3**)

But in reality these practices provide no help in dealing with inner or outward self- indulgences. These regulations based on persuasive arguments, human wisdom (philosophy), mysticism, and asceticism, have no power to restrain the sensual thoughts, feelings, or indulgences of the human fallen nature.

As a matter of fact, denying the flesh or body desires merely arouses them. These things have no value, ability, or power to solve our inward problem.

The term self-indulgence in v.23 may be a play on words “feelness.” These false philosophies promised a fullness of wisdom through severe Asceticism, but it failed to achieve the intended goal.

(Cut off body part, hooks into skin, vows of poverty, monks, nuns, priest.)

**1 Timothy 4:1-6** Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, **2** speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, **3** forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. **4** For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; **5** for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. **6** If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

**Conclusion:**  Commentary on the futility of Asceticism, the great nineteenth century Scottish preacher Alezander McClaren wrote, “Any asceticism is a great deal more to men’s taste than abandoning self.” “There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us and that is the power of the indwelling Christ.” [**Ibid. 124**]

We need not be led or intimidated by such who teach or practice these false religions of human philosophy, legalism, mysticism or asceticism. (**Colossians 2:10**)