

VERSE 20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world

(Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, [*part ei if + aor.act.ind.2p. apothnesko die + prep sun + noun instr.m.s. christos + prep apo + d.a.w/noun gen.nt.p. stoicheia basic principles + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. kosmos*], **why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as** [τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε [*interrog. tis why? + conj hos as + pres.act.part.nom.m.p. zao live + prep en + noun loc.m.s. kosmos + pres.pass.ind.2p. dogmatizomai obey regulations*]),

VERSE 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch (Μὴ ἅψη μηδὲ γεύση μηδὲ θίγης [*neg me + aor.mid.imper.2s. hapto touch + conj mede not + aor.mid.imper.2s. geuomai taste + conj mede + aor.mid.imper.2s. thegnano touch; handle*])!"

VERSE 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) -- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men (ἃ ἔστιν πάντα εἰς φθορὰν τῇ ἀποχρήσει, κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων [*pro.nom.nt.p. hos which + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi + adj.nom.nt.p. pas + prep eis + noun acc.f.s. phthora decay + d.a.w/noun loc.f.s. apochresis process of being used + prep kata + d.a.w/noun acc.nt.p. entalma commandment + conj + noun acc.f.pl. didaslalia teaching + d.a.w/noun gen.m.p. anthropos*])?)

VERSE 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence (ἅτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας ἐν ἐθελοθησκία καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνη [καὶ] ἀφειδία σώματος, οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός [*adj.nom.nt.p. hosis* “These...matters” + *pres.act.ind.3s. eimi* + *noun acc.m.s. logos* “appearance” + *part men* + *pres.act.part.nom.nt.p. echo* have + *noun gen.f.s. sophia* + *prep en* + *noun loc.f.s. ethelothreskia* “self-made religion” + *conj* + *noun loc.f.s. ptapenophrosune* self-abasement + *conj* + *noun loc.f.s. apheidia* severe discipline + *noun gen.nt.s. soma* + *neg ouk* + *prep en* + *noun loc.f.s. time value* + *indef.pro.loc.f.s. tis* + *prep pros* against + *noun acc.f.s. pleromone* indulgence + *d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. sarx*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 20-23

1. Paul now addresses the absurdity of adhering to those things that the Colossians were set free from based on Christ’s work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.
2. “If you have died with Christ” is a first class condition (part *ei* w/aor.ind.) which means ‘if and you have died.’
3. In this instance the death Paul refers to is a positive thing.
4. The nonsense (“elementary principles”) that enslaved believers before their salvation no longer to have any place in the CWL.
5. The noun “elementary principles” (*stoicheion*) occurs 2x in Colossians (2:8, 20) and 2x in Galatians (4:3, 9) and all those references are used in a negative sense of that which is cosmic and to be shunned.
6. In Galatians the background is legalistic Judaism imposed on the Galatians by false teachers (Judaizers) who said that salvation (and spirituality) was not based strictly on grace, but was based on grace plus works (e.g., keeping the Law).
7. This is the teaching of any number of modern denominations.
8. In the instance of the Colossian heresy the form of teaching and practices was different but the effect was the same.
9. Legalism and ascetic practices coupled with adoration of angels producing visions (here fake) in order to achieve supernatural insights was what was being presented to the Colossian church.
10. A bogus form of spirituality was what the false teachers were promoting at Colossae.
11. To embrace that was to fall back into that which believers had died to through positional sanctification.
12. The teaching of sound doctrine that they had be privy to was designed to liberate them experientially.

13. The false teachers were imposing customs (i.e., holy day observances) and regulations on the Colossians (cf. v. 16).
14. Paul labels all these things as belonging to this world.
15. While the false teachers claimed that their visionary experience of the worship of angels was the worship of benign (good) angels, Paul is telling them that they are submitting to evil entities.
16. In the apodosis (that which follows the “if” clause) there is the question (“why”; interrog. *tis*) points out the irrational choices of those who claim to belong to Christ.
17. The words “as if living in the world” refers to their old life prior to salvation.
18. Believers are in the world but not of it.
19. To submit to the system advocated by the false teachers was to live in the cosmos as an active participant.
20. The idea here is: “as though you still belonged to the world” or “as if you were still alive to the world.”
21. In Christ believers are positionally dead to the cosmos.
22. What believers are experientially is a different matter.
23. Breaking free from the concepts that bind humans in legalism, human viewpoint and pseudo-knowledge is a different matter.
24. Intake of BD frees us from bondage of the cosmos so we can live our lives unshackled from the bonds of cosmic beliefs and practices.
25. “Why...do you submit yourselves to decrees” is the present passive indicative of the hapax verb *dogmatizomai* which means ‘to obey regulations.’
26. The corresponding noun *dogma* is found in Col. 2:14 and Eph. 2:15.
27. These things included dietary practices and special day observances (cf. v. 16).
28. Here Paul is presenting a very real threat to the spiritual well-being of the Colossians as those who have not fallen away from the truth even though some have come under the influence of the false teachers (similar to the situation in the Galatian churches).
29. V. 21 provides a sample of the types of “regulations/decrees” that were being imposed on the Colossians.
30. Of the three items the meaning of “do not taste” refers back to “food” and “drink” in v. 16.
31. The significance of the first item “do not handle” (aor.mid.imper. *hapto*) and its relationship to the third item “do not touch” (aor.act.imper. *thignano* touch) is not immediately apparent.
32. The first item, based on the usage of the verb “handle/touch” in 1Cor. 7:1, sees this as some type of sexual celibacy or abstention.
33. The practice of celibacy is characteristic of certain religious persuasions.
34. But note 1 Tim. 4:3: “*men* who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.”
35. “Do not touch” refers to any kind of contact with something considered holy or unclean.
36. We do not know what it was that they were telling the Colossians not to come in contact with.
37. In any case, it represented legalism.
38. In v. 22 Paul presents yet another reason for the Colossians to reject the regulations being imposed upon them.
39. “The things destined to perish with use” is designed to point out that the legalistic regulations have no permanency.

40. Paul used the noun “perish” (*phthora*) in reference to that which pertains to the temporal realm and will eventually pass away (cf. Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 15:42, 50; Gal. 6:8; cp. 2Pet. 1:4; 2:12, 19) versus the coming kingdom of God.
41. “In accordance with the commandments and teachings of men” has a counterpart in Isa. 29:13 (“Then the Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words, and honor Me with the lips (i.e. lip-service), but they remove their hearts from Me; and their reverence (fear) for Me consists of tradition learned *from men*.”).
42. The verse that follows in Isa. 29:14 is parallel to Paul’s statement that the rules and regulations of men will perish (“Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous, And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.”).
43. Jesus likewise condemned those who adhered to the “traditions of the elders” who distorted the Law with their legalistic practices (Matt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7).
44. Paul continues to expose the fallacy of man-made regulations in v. 23.
45. Paul concedes that the rules and practices of the false teachers “have an appearance (*logos*) of wisdom” but are of “no value against fleshly indulgence.”
46. He lists three things that pass for being impressive: “self-made religion”; “self-abasement” and “severe treatment of the body.”
47. The first term (*eulothrerskia*) only occurs here and means a self-imposed worship and relates to their angel fetish.
48. The second term (*tapeinophrosune*) means either humility in a good sense (Acts 20:19; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12; 1Pet. 5:5) or in a bad sense (Col. 2:18; 23).
49. These types appeared so pious and condescending, but like other Christian virtues, can be faked.
50. The third item “severe treatment of the body” has a noun that is only used here; the noun is *apheidia*.
51. It refers to the arbitrary imposition of various forms of self-denial and neglect that was designed to show how dedicated these false teachers were, and to demonstrate what it took to gain special insights through visions.
52. Paul exposes the fallacy of all this nonsense by saying that “these matters,,, *are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.”
53. Paul is referring to the extreme ascetic practices of the practitioners of the contrived angel-cult seeking to impose itself on the Colossians.
54. There was a belief in ancient times (and still in vogue) that extreme acts of asceticism could transform the lower or base nature of man leading to refinement and illumination into something higher.
55. Paul unmasks this pseudo-spirituality by asserting that it has “no value/worth against (prep *pros*) the indulgence of the flesh” (STA).
56. The term “indulgence” (*pleomone*) only occurs here and means ‘satisfaction.’
57. In other words the extreme treatment of the body does not reign in the lust pattern.
58. “The flesh” is technical for the genetically engineered STA/OSN.
59. What believers have in BD is the only thing that can counter “fleshly indulgence” is the development of the new man (cf. Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22, 24; Col. 3:9-10).
60. Cf. Ps. 119: 11 “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”

END: Colossians Chapter Two
January, 2017 Jack M. Ballinger