

Week 4

WALK IN CHRIST, NOT HUMAN PHILOSOPHIES

Colossians 2:6-23

.....
*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk
in him*

(Colossians 2:6, ESV)
.....

Introduction

I was recently talking with another pastor about the rapid spread of Islam throughout the world. We discussed how one of the things that makes Islam so transferable is that it's built on five simple pillars. You do those five things and you're a Muslim. It's very cut and dry. It made me wonder, "Is Christianity that simple?"

After all, aren't there a lot of rules to obey and a lot of sins to avoid? Don't you have to understand lots of important theology and history? Don't you have to take positions on a number of controversial doctrines? Is Christianity complex or simple?

As I pondered these questions, it occurred to me that Christianity is incredibly simple. It's about treasuring Jesus. That's all. That's how we begin a relationship with God. And that's how we continue a relationship with God.

Sure, there are other things to learn and think about—many that help us to treasure Jesus more—but at the end of the day, it's a simple faith. It's not an easy faith—treasuring Jesus is difficult to do. But the expectations are straightforward.

Despite the simplicity of the gospel message, the default mode of our hearts is to make it more complicated with rules, religion, and extra-biblical practices. These "human traditions" are "of no value" (2:23). Paul knows that we are prone to add extras to our faith, which is why he tells us to continue following Jesus the same way we started—by faith. Simply treasuring and trusting Jesus and all that he has done for us on the cross.

Implication

1. The point of verse 6 is that we should continue in the faith the same way we started: by grace, through faith. Why, then, do so many Christians seem to think that we're saved by grace but that we grow through personal effort and disciplined rule-keeping?
2. What are some "human traditions" that "have an appearance of wisdom" that Christians are tempted to put confidence in rather than Jesus? What are the dangers associated with them?
3. This passage encourages us to keep walking by faith and nourishing our hope in Christ. What are some ways that you do this in your weekly routine? How do you keep these helpful practices from becoming merely "self-made religion"?
4. Read verses 13-15 again. How does it make you feel to know that God has won this decisive victory, through Christ, on your behalf?

Other Issues

What is Paul referring to in verse 15 that Jesus “disarmed the rulers and authorities”? Why is this important?

These “rulers and authorities” are angelic beings who are here pictured as resisting God. Paul also uses this phrase in Colossians 1:16 and Ephesians 6:12 to refer to the demonic powers that are at work, despite not being visible.

The imagery here is like that of a triumphant Roman general, parading his defeated captives through the streets of Rome. Christ’s victory on the cross halted the demons in their attempts to stop His redemptive work and stripped Satan of his powers. Hebrews 2:14 says, “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

To worship such defeated and humiliated beings would be the height of folly. The cross is the answer to the Colossian errorists’ insistence on worshipping angelic beings. Through the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross (cf. Eph. 1:20–23; 3:10), God canceled the believer’s debt, defeating Satan and his fallen angels. That is why Paul can affirm in Romans 8:37–39, “In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Though we still wrestle against the forces of evil (Eph. 6:12), they cannot be victorious. Christ, the crucified, risen Lord of all, reigns supreme in the universe. To be united with Him is to be free from Satan’s dominion.

The death of Christ brings transformation, pardon, and victory. That adds up to complete salvation with complete forgiveness and triumph. No wonder Paul said, “May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).⁸

⁸ John MacArthur, *Colossians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1992). 111.

Sermon Notes