
Book of Colossians

Lesson 6 - Wrong Ways to
Master the Flesh

Colossians 2:16-23

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Therefore ... (Col 2:16)

- In Christ the fullness of deity dwells bodily, and believers partake of the fullness because they are in Him (Col 2:9-10).
- You were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh (Col 2:11).
- You were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him. He made you alive together with Him (Col 2:12-13).
- **Wrong** ways to master the fleshly nature:
 1. “self-made religion” (Col 2:16-17)
 2. “self-abasement” (Col 2:18-19)
 3. “severe treatment of the body” (Col 2:20-22)



Legalistic rules and rituals

Colossians 2:16-17

- **Stop passing judgment** ~ stop using these rules & rituals in an attempt to gain spirituality or to measure your spirituality.
- Dietary regulations and ritual observances = *traditions of men*.
- **Self-made religion** = Restrictions beyond what is revealed in the Word of God.
- ***Follow these things or don't follow them ~ it matters not.***
Adhering to behavioral checklists gains no favor with God.
- **Christ is the reality** ~ stop focusing on His shadow.



Mystical experiences and visions

Colossians 2:18-19

- **Stop declaring others unworthy.**
- Angelic spirit beings are **never** to be worshipped.
- **Ecstatic experiences** and **mystical visions** are **subjective** and impossible to verify ~ focus on the **objective** truths of God's Word.
- **False humility** can be a cover for great pride and arrogance.
- **Remain connected to Christ** ~ He is head of His body, the Church. He is our only source of life, nourishment, and growth.
- **Human mind + sin nature = dangerous error**
(Anticipates what Paul will say about a **godly** mindset)



Ascetic restrictions and regulations

Colossians 2:20-22

- **Since you have died with Christ** ~ *Baptism* pictures death to the sinful flesh, and a believer's new life in Christ (Col 2:12-13).
- **Abstaining** from things that can be *handled, tasted, and touched* ~ Your spirituality or continued relationship with God does not depend on avoiding specific consumables, which have no permanent existence and no significance in themselves.
- **Man-made teachings** ~ restrictions without divine authority. They are "in accordance with man's commandments" but not in accordance with God's Word.



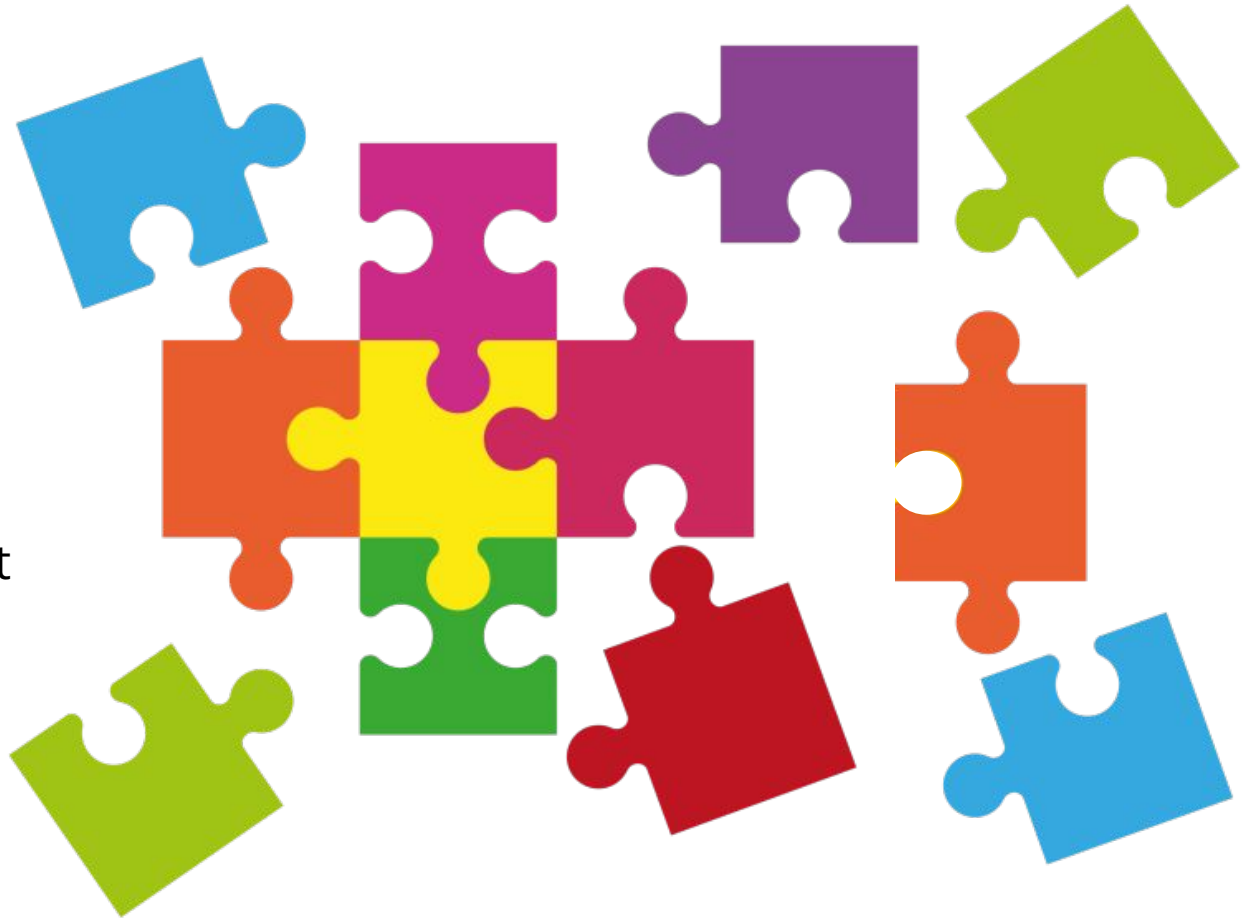
Wrong ways to master the fleshly nature

1. **Legalism:** *"self-made religion"* (Col 2:16-17)
 2. **Mysticism:** *"self-abasement"* (Col 2:18-19)
 3. **Asceticism:** *"severe treatment of the body"* (Col 2:20-22)
- These matters can have the **appearance of wisdom**.
 - None can provide any power for **mastering the sin nature**.
 - Only our focus on Christ and our vital connection with Him can provide the desire and power to live a life that pleases Him.



Puzzle Pieces

- traditions of men
- observing special festival days
- keeping dietary rules
- false humility
- worship of angels
- fascination with spirit beings
- severe treatment of the body
- ecstatic visions



The Search for a Colossian Heresy

(circa AD 60)

Common items:

2:8 - empty deception; traditions of men; self-made religion

	Historic Judaism - 1440 BC	Greek Mystery Cults - 530 BC	Jewish Mysticism - 100 BC	Essenism - 100 BC to AD 70	Montanism - AD 150 to 400	Gnosticism - AD 160 to 450
Worship of Spirits 2:8 - elemental spirits; 2:15 - hierarchy of rulers/authorities in the spirit realm; 2:18 - false humility and angel worship		✓ ¹		✓		✓ ¹
Asceticism 2:21 - do not handle/taste/touch; 2:23 - severe treatment of the body		✓ ²		✓	✓	✓
Observance of Special Rituals/Days 2:16 - food or drink; festival, new moon, sabbath	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Ecstatic Inspirations 2:18 - visions he has seen		✓	✓		✓	
Originated in Phrygia		✓ ³			✓	

¹ Dualism (deity → spirit hierarchy) ² Pythagorean School & Stoicism (e.g.) ³ Cult of Cybele - 200 BC

Application

- Are there activities in your spiritual life or your church life which you participate in because you think those things are required to maintain your relationship with Christ? Don't allow yourself to be in bondage to man-made rules. God cannot love you any more than He already does right now.
- Are you standing in judgment over other believers because they are doing or failing to do certain things that you think are important? Do your expectations involve *essential* things or are they merely *non-essentials* of the faith? Let's exercise more grace as we deal with each other in the family of God.

