Colossians 2:16-23

Review…

- **Colossians 1:24-2:7 – The mystery of the chruch…**
  - Paul rejoiced in the mystery of the church – that Jesus dwells in our hearts…
  - As a result of knowing the mystery – Paul preached / warned / and taught others…
  - Knowing the mystery brought maturity to the church…
- **Colossians 2:8-15 – Beware of worldy wisdom…**
  - Paul warned the church to beware the wisdom the comes from this world…
    - Philosophy – the love of knowledge – thinking the answers are in education…
    - The pursuit of wealth – that will only leave us empty and unsatisfied…
    - The traditions of men – living in fear – following superstitions
  - Instead the church was to follow Godly wisdom…
    - The wisdom of God is found in knowing Jesus Christ – we will only be content in Him!
    - Jesus gives us a new start / new life – because we have been forgiven!

False teachings – trusting in religion… (*3 things*)

- **Beware of Religion…**
  - There were those in the church who said the only way to grow in Jesus – religion…
    - The more they did for God - the more they would grow in God...
    - The more they read their Bible / went to church / prayed / gave...
    - The more God would accept them / bless them / love them!
  - But there are only two things that can come from trusting in religion…
    - If we manage to keep all the man made rules - we feel like we have boasting rights....
    - If we fail to keep the rules - and do not do as well as others – condemnation…
    - So Paul warned the church about the danger of trusting in religion!

- **1st – Do not be judged… vs. 16-17**
  - Do not let anyone judge you about your convictions…
    - Not all believers in Jesus have the same convictions – what we can or cannot do…
      - Paul gives us 2 examples of these 'grey' areas in a Christian's life – food / Sabbath…
      - These were critical issues in Paul's day – he was reaching out to a gentile church…
      - The gentiles did not worry about eating meat / they did not honor the Sabbath day
      - Where as the Jews – who represented the 1st church in Jerusalem – did both!
    - The Old Testament vs. New Testament on eating meat…
      - According to the Law there were 2 kinds of food – clean / unclean – **Leviticus 11**…
      - But Jesus elaborated on the command in **Matthew 15:11**
      - It is not what goes in that makes you unclean – it is what comes out of your heart…
      - Whatever you eat – it just goes into your stomach – then into the CR…
      - No matter what you eat – it all ends up in the same place – obviously…
      - So you are not a better person if you do not eat pork – or worse if you do…
      - **I Timothy 4:4** – "Every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused."

- The Old Testament vs. New Testament on what day to worship God…
  - According to the Law the Sabbath was required – 4th commandment - **Exodus 20:8**
  - In **Numbers 15:32** a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day...
  - The punishment for his crime was to be stoned to death by the people!
  - But the real purpose of the Sabbath was to point us to Jesus – **Romans 14:6**
  - If you see the shadow of your best friend - you do not run up and hug the shadow...
  - But the shadow does tell you your friend is close…
  - The Sabbath was a shadow of Jesus – He is where we find true rest…
  - So whether you worship on a Saturday / Sunday – it is all about Jesus!

o In these 'grey' areas of our Christian walk we should not be judgmental of each other…
- Those who are the 'weaker' saints – bound by more rules – do not eat / certain days…
  - Weak not if their faith – but in their understanding of the word - **I Corinthians 8:7**
  - Should not criticize those who have more freedom in their walk in Christ…
  - This is where most people tend to struggle – be judgmental of others…
  - If we think we cannot see movies / cannot listen to secular music / no tattoos…
  - If we have a rule we believe we must follow – and someone else do not…
  - Then we tend to think we are better Christians – more righteous than they are!
- You cannot force someone to follow your rules...
  - If I tell you that you should not gamble – I have given you a law…
  - The problem is I have not changed your heart – you still want to see movies…
  - So I have set you up for failure – you will watch a movie – then feel like a failure…
  - If instead I tell you to go to the Lord – ask Him if you should see a movie…
  - God will tell you – and if He says no He will change you heart so you do not want to!
  - God does not just give you the Law - He gives you the ability to live up to the Law!

o Those who have more freedom - eat what they want / worship every day…
- These 'stronger' brothers should not look down upon those who have more rules…
  - This tends to be the easier position to take – having more freedom in Jesus…
  - If someone follows more rules than we do – 'God bless them' – we do not mind…
  - So long as they do not force their rules onto us!
- It is true that things are not sin – but to the one who thinks they are wrong…
  - We might know that pork is nothing / cards are nothing / movies are nothing…
  - But to a brother who thinks they are evil – to him they are sin - **Romans 14:23**…
  - So be considerate of the convictions of your brother in Christ – **I Corinthians 8:9**…
  - If eating pork stumbles your brother – do not eat in front of him…
  - If watching a movie stumbles him – then do not watch the movie in front of him…
  - If playing with cards stumbles – then do not put out the deck when he comes by…
- Respect the convictions of others - do you best not to offend their rules...
  - We need patience - to be able to overlook the little differences we may have...
  - Then they will be open to what you have to say - be willing to watch your lives...
  - You can show them a better way - a relationship with Jesus that changes the heart!

- **2ND – DO NOT BE CHEATED… VS. 18-19**

- There were those who wanted to 'cheat' the church out of their reward…
  - Cheated – only here in the NT – picture of a referee giving a 'bad call'…
  - Like when a basketball ref makes a bad call that costs a team the win…
  - There are those who want to try to cheat us out of our reward in Jesus…
  - They try and get us to look somewhere else than to Jesus for our salvation!
- Paul gives four ways in which we can be cheated…
  - 1st – If we delight in humility – the idea being false humility…
    - Pride can be tricky – it is not always easy to see – but it always sets us up for a fall…
    - Pride can be – I think I know it all / I am never wrong / I do not need correction
    - Pride can also be – thinking I am nothing / huya-huya / pride means its all about me
    - Whether it is arrogance / or 'false' humility – if I am the focus it is pride…
    - **Proverbs 16:18** – "Pride goes before destruction, an arrogant spirit before a fall."
  - 2nd – We are cheated if we worship angels…
    - Trusting and praying to someone else other than God to help us get to heaven…
    - The idea of praying to saints to help get you into heaven…
    - Men or women who lives such pious lives they have 'extra good works'…
    - So after they die they become a mediator between a holy God and us…
    - An attractive idea because it seems like they can relate us – they are sinners too…
    - And it allows us to put someone between us and the conviction of God!
    - But it is a FALSE teaching – that will cheat us out of the reward of heaven!
    - **I Timothy 2:5** – "For *there* one Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus…"
  - 3rd – We are cheated if we have pride…
    - People who claim to have 'visions' – believe they had 'special revelations' from God
    - Who try to impress others by their 'super spiritual' status with God…
    - But for all their boasting – it is just pride that is cheating them of the reward!
    - Just because you carry around a big Bible - does not mean you are safe...
    - Just because you can quote a 1000 verses - does not mean you are forgiven...
    - It is only a relationship with Jesus that brings salvation!
  - 4th – We are cheated if we miss Jesus…
    - We are the body of Christ – He is the head over us all – holds us all together…
    - So long as you still have your head – your body can function / grow…
    - But if you cut the head off a person – the rest of the body is going to die…
    - In the same way the only way we are going to grow in faith – is through Jesus!

- **3RD – DO NOT BE ENSLAVED… VS. 20-23**
  - Paul warns about the rules of this world – speaking of religion…
    - Most people prefer 'religion' and 'tradition' to a relationship with Jesus...
      - Religion is a great way to justify sin - it gives me an excuse to disobey God...
      - I can do what I want from Monday - Saturday / so long as I go to church on Sunday...
      - I am all right with God so long as I give my 10% to the church...
      - As long as I was baptized - and am a member of the church - God is ok with me...
      - As though man made rules can somehow wipe away the sin in a heart far from God!
    - Religion is familiar – part of our identity...
      - We live in a community where many are very hardened towards the Gospel...

        - Because they have been indoctrinated in a lifetime of traditions and superstitions...
        - And they are proud and think 'religion' is enough to get them into heaven...
        - When you dare to challenge those beliefs - you immediately come under fire...
- Since we have died with Jesus – why do we go back to religion…
    - We go back to the rules – do not touch / do not taste / do not handle…
        - The problem with these rules – they are not from God…
        - They are man's ideas about how to be good enough to be accepted by God…
        - Religion is man's attempt to reach up to a perfect God in heaven…
        - Religion always falls short – cause we can never be 'good enough' to earn heaven!
    - Rules – religion - can never really change someone...
        - Rules are a fence that tries to keep people safe from temptations/sin...
        - They seem to be a good idea - and most people (*and churches*) take this approach...
        - Here is the danger - they can only control your actions - not change your heart...
        - In the end people might think their rules make them strong in the Lord...
        - When in reality their rules make them 'weak' - taking their eyes off of Jesus...
        - They trust in their rules - rather than looking to and depending on the Lord!
    - The church is most well known today for their 'religion'...
        - Do not drink / do not smoke / do not go to discos / do not have tattoos...
        - And when the world looks at the church - and sees all of these rules...
        - Most of which the very people who make the rules - do not even keep...
        - The world walks away from Jesus - saying who would want that!
        - God does not tell us we are to be know by our rules - but by our love - **John 13:35**
    - The only way to exact lasting change is a relationship with Jesus...
        - When you got married - you likely changed a lot of your life 'habits'...
        - Not because there was a rule - but for the love of your wife you wanted to!
        - Rules do not make the difference - it is the relationship that changes the heart...
        - It is God that changes our hearts so we no longer want go the wrong way!
        - If you see someone struggling with their walk – do not give them rules...
        - Instead tell them the truth - IN LOVE - don't let them go on in their sin...
        - Give them Jesus - point them back to the one who can change their heart!